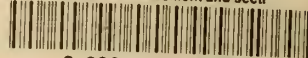


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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
AND
SECTION 4(f) STATEMENT

FOR THE
RECONSTRUCTION OF MONTANA ROUTE 78
ABSAROEKE-COLUMBUS
STILLWATER COUNTY, MONTANA
F 78-2(5)27

PLEASE RETURN

Submitted by
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
and
Montana Department of Highways

July 1989



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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action consists of the reconstruction of a portion of Montana Route 78 (FAP 78) in Stillwater County, Montana. The proposed project, known as the Absarokee-Columbus project, will extend from a point approximately 5.7 miles south of Absarokee to a point approximately one-half mile south of Columbus near the intersection with FAS 421. The total length of the project is approximately 19.1 miles. The project location is shown on Figure 1. The project vicinity and termini are shown on Figure 2.

In accordance with the Montana Department of Highways Level of Development Plan, the proposed action will involve three distinct typical sections. The section from the beginning of the project to the intersection with FAS 419 (to Fishtail) will be constructed as a 28' roadway with a subgrade for a future 40' roadway. From this junction to the Town of Absarokee, a 32' roadway with a subgrade for a future 40' roadway is planned. Through Absarokee a $\pm 46'$ overlay will be placed to maintain existing drainage patterns. The remainder of the project to the intersection of FAS 421 will be constructed as a 32' roadway with a subgrade for a future 40' roadway. Typical sections are shown on Figures 3-5.

The horizontal and vertical alignments will be designed to a 60 mph design speed with four per cent maximum grades and $4\frac{3}{4}$ degree maximum horizontal curves. An exception to standards will be requested for any areas where the minimum standard cannot be met. The project will utilize the existing general alignment to the extent practicable.

Project improvements include grading, drainage, surfacing, signing, pavement markings, guardrail, topsoiling, seeding, irrigation system revisions, obliteration of the existing

roadway, and necessary utility relocation. In order to facilitate construction, this project will be split into two smaller projects. The exact location of the project split will be determined as the design progresses. Construction is tentatively planned for 1992.

Other related projects in the vicinity of the proposed action include the reconstruction of the existing bridge on FAS 420 at Absarokee and the reconstruction of FAS 419 from the junction with FAP 78 to Nye. The bridge on FAS 420 at Absarokee is planned for replacement in 1989. The bridges on FAS 419 at M.P. 0 are planned for replacement in 1991. Reconstruction of the roadway on FAS 419 between FAP 78 and Dean is tentatively planned for construction around 1993.

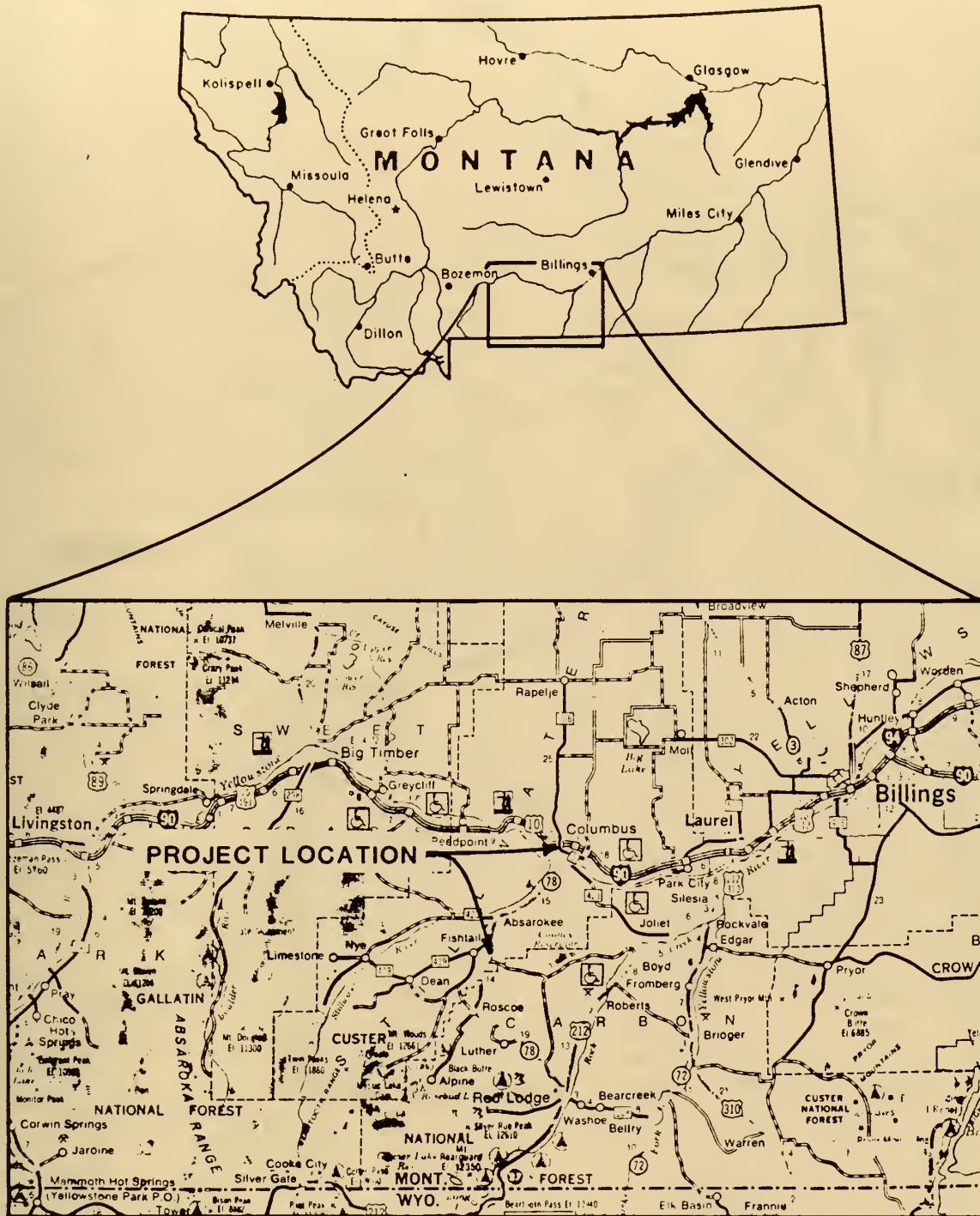
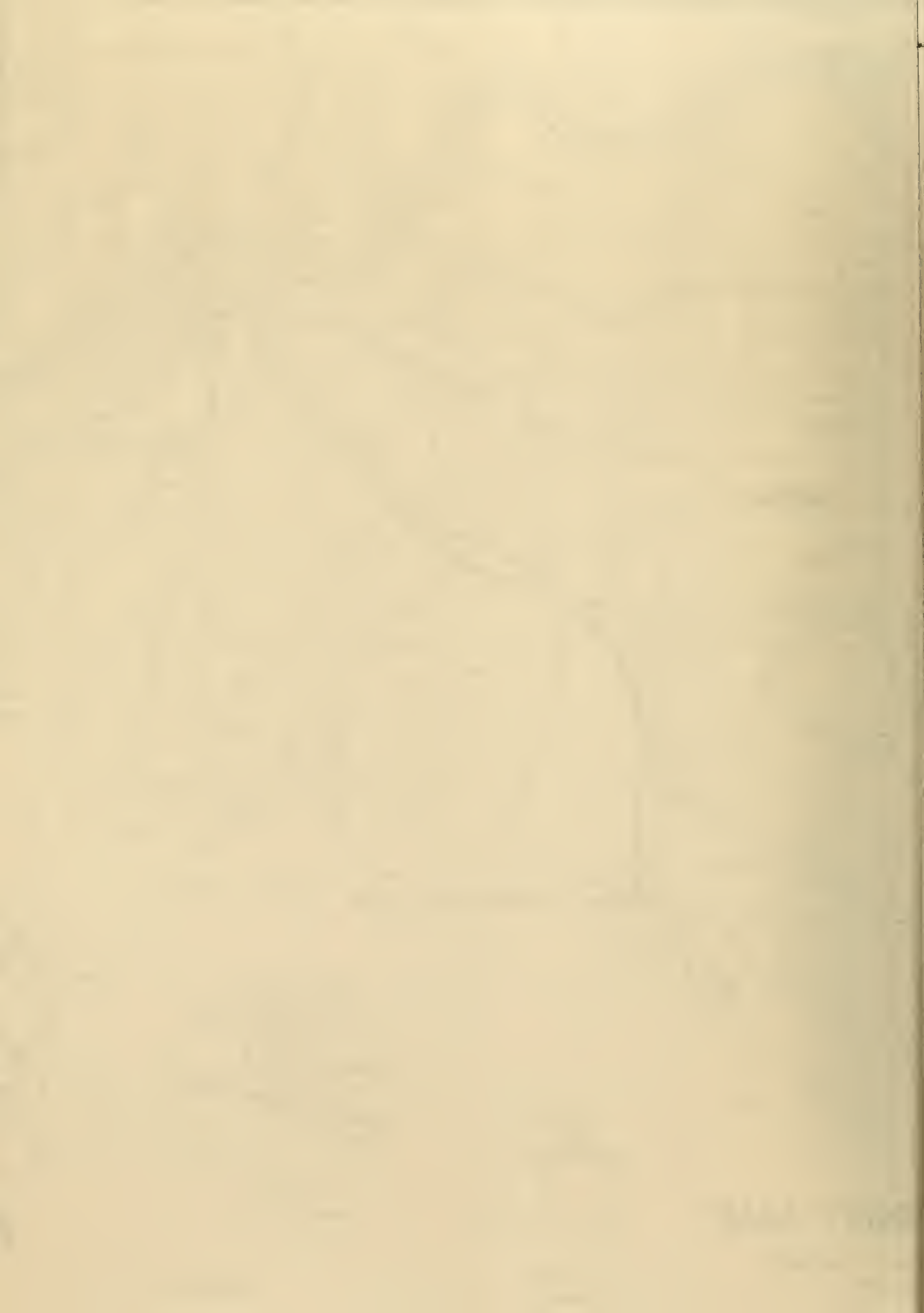


FIGURE 1
 ABSAROKEE - COLUMBUS
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 PROJECT LOCATION MAP





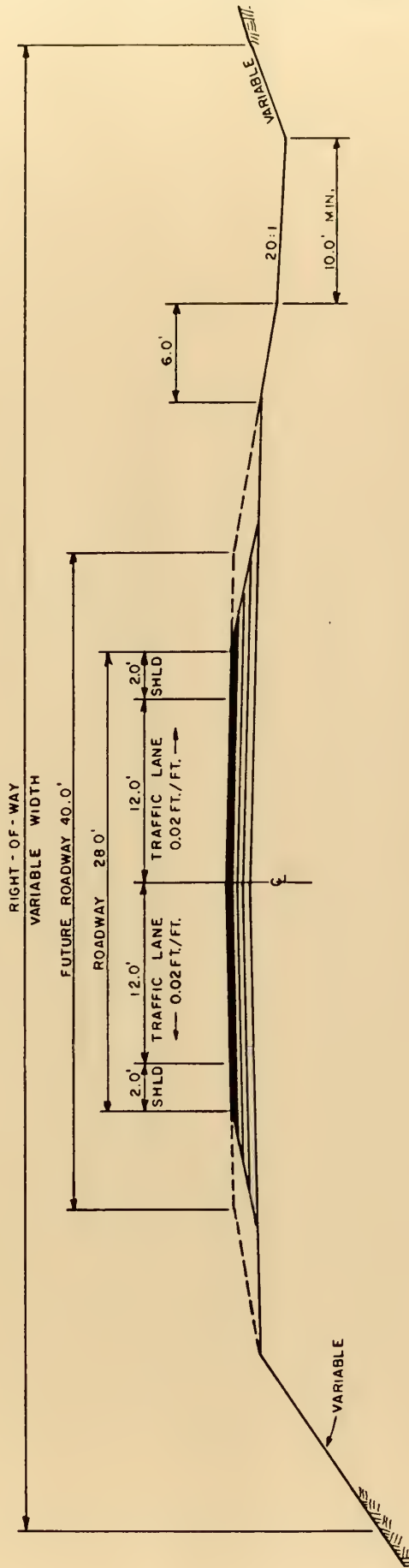


FIGURE 3
ABSAROEKEE - COLUMBUS
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TYPICAL SECTION A
M.P. 26.9 TO M.P. 30.1



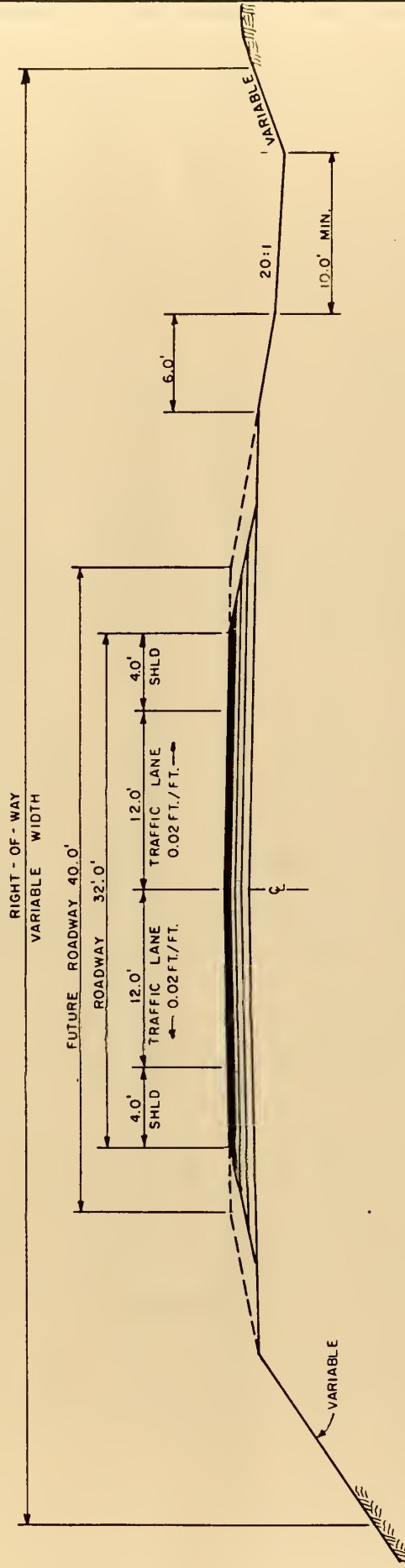


FIGURE 4
ABSAROEKE - COLUMBUS
F78-2(5)27
TYPICAL SECTION B
M.P. 30.1 TO M.P. 46.0
(EXCLUDING ABSAROEKE)



FIGURE 5
ABSARKEE - COLUMBUS
F78-2(5)27
TYPICAL SECTION C
ABSARKEE OVERLAY

II. PURPOSE AND NEED

Montana Route 78 (FAP 78) is classified by the Montana Department of Highways' Functional Classification System as a minor arterial. This route connects Red Lodge, the county seat of Carbon County, to Columbus, the county seat of Stillwater County, and to Interstate 90 near the north end of the project. FAP 78 is an important element contributing to the local and regional economy which is heavily oriented toward the agriculture and mining industries as well as recreation activities.

There are many areas along the existing highway that do not meet the minimum design standards for primary highways adopted by the Montana Department of Highways applicable to this project.

The primary objectives of the proposed action are as follows:

- to reconstruct the roadway to provide a roadway surface capable of handling projected traffic demands and loads,
- to enhance highway convenience and safety and reduce accidents by improving the horizontal and vertical alignments, and
- to provide a modern highway facility compatible with the human and natural environment.

The existing highway is a narrow, deteriorating, two lane facility originally constructed in 1935 and improved in 1945 under a defense access - raw materials contract to haul materials from the mines in the area. The general alignment is characterized by numerous sharp curves and rolling grades. Original construction consisted of a road mix surface with a 22' finished surface width. There was a widening project in 1957 from milepost 45 to the end of the project at milepost 46

where road mix surfacing was placed to a 28' width. A safety related project completed in 1984 provided some signing and slope flattening from milepost 44.8 to milepost 45.1.

The need for the proposed action is best portrayed by the highway sufficiency rating for this stretch of the highway. The highway sufficiency rating system provides a uniform method of determining the adequacy of a particular segment of highway. Consideration is given to the highway foundation, surface, drainage, safety and capacity. Currently, a section of highway with a sufficiency rating of less than 60 is considered deficient. A section with a sufficiency rating of less than 40 is considered critically deficient. Based on the Department's 1981 Sufficiency Study, this segment of Montana Route 78 has a sufficiency rating of 41.2 compared to a maximum possible rating of 100. This rating almost classified the roadway as critically deficient at that time. Due to the lack of an adequate roadway base and the extent of deterioration, complete reconstruction is required.

The highway sufficiency rating also points to the need to improve safety on this stretch of roadway. The present horizontal and vertical alignments, coupled with the width and condition of the roadway, contribute to unsafe conditions. Five segments of the roadway have been identified as high hazard locations based on accident analyses conducted in 1983 and 1984. Some signing and slope flattening improvements were subsequently completed in some critical locations in an attempt to improve safety. Table 1 shows how the accident rate and accident severity for Montana Route 78 in the project area compare with statewide rates for primary routes for the years 1979 through 1987.

Table 1
ACCIDENT RATE AND SEVERITY

	<u>Accident Rate</u>	<u>Accident Severity</u>
Montana Route 78		
(MP 27.4 to MP 46.0)	4.06	1.51
Statewide Average	2.02	1.51
Critical Rate	3.45	1.76

1988 Average Daily Traffic Volume (ADT) on Montana Route 78 in the project area is approximately 1500 vehicles per day. Projected traffic volume for the design year, Year 2012, is 2500 vehicles per day. The Design Hourly Volume (DHV) is 330 vehicles per hour. The existing facility is not capable of adequately handling this projected traffic load.



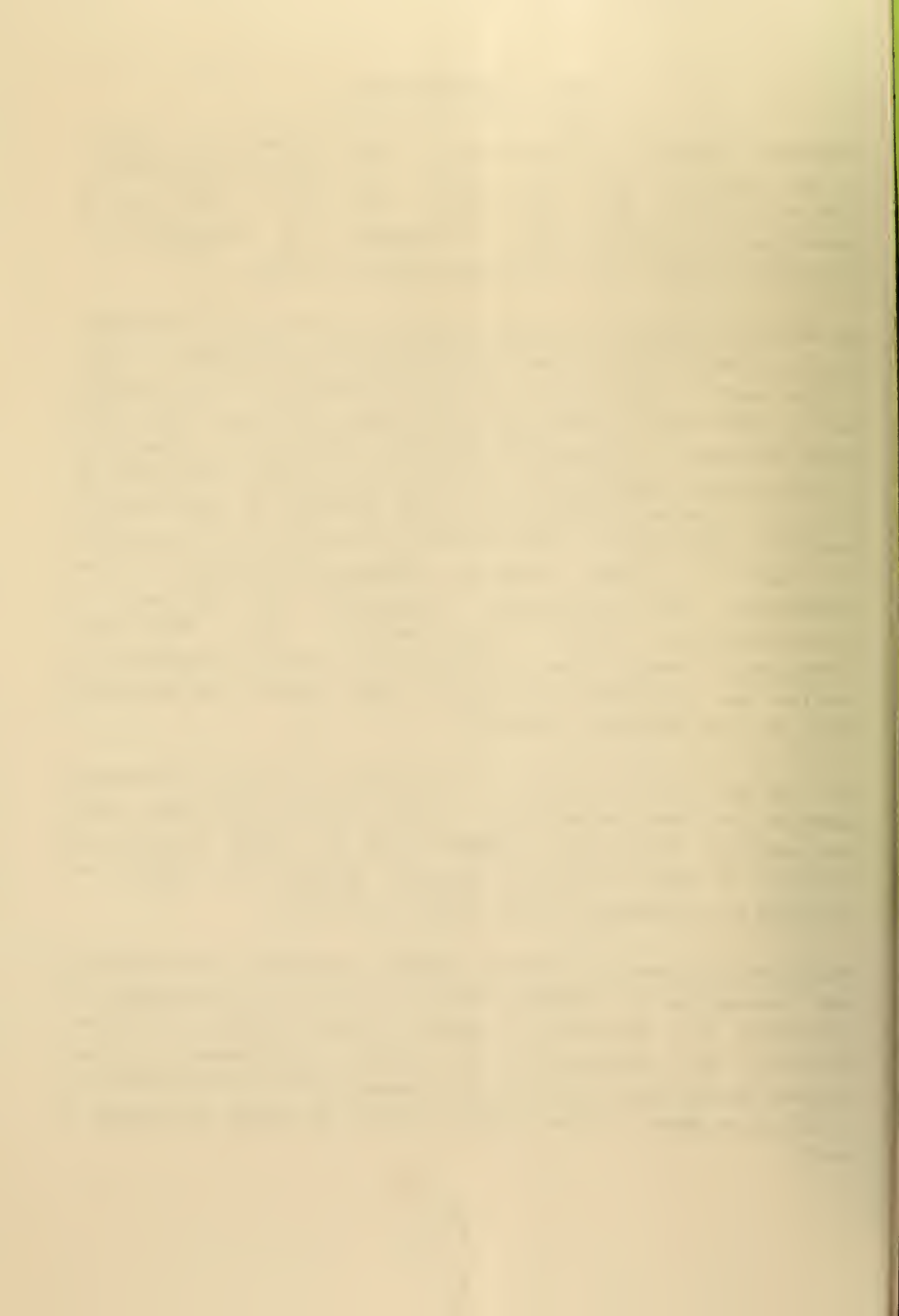
III. ALTERNATIVES

Potential alignment alternatives for this project are limited by the existing land use, terrain, and other environmental factors in the project area. While land use in the area is predominantly agricultural, development of homesites is occurring in many areas along the project corridor.

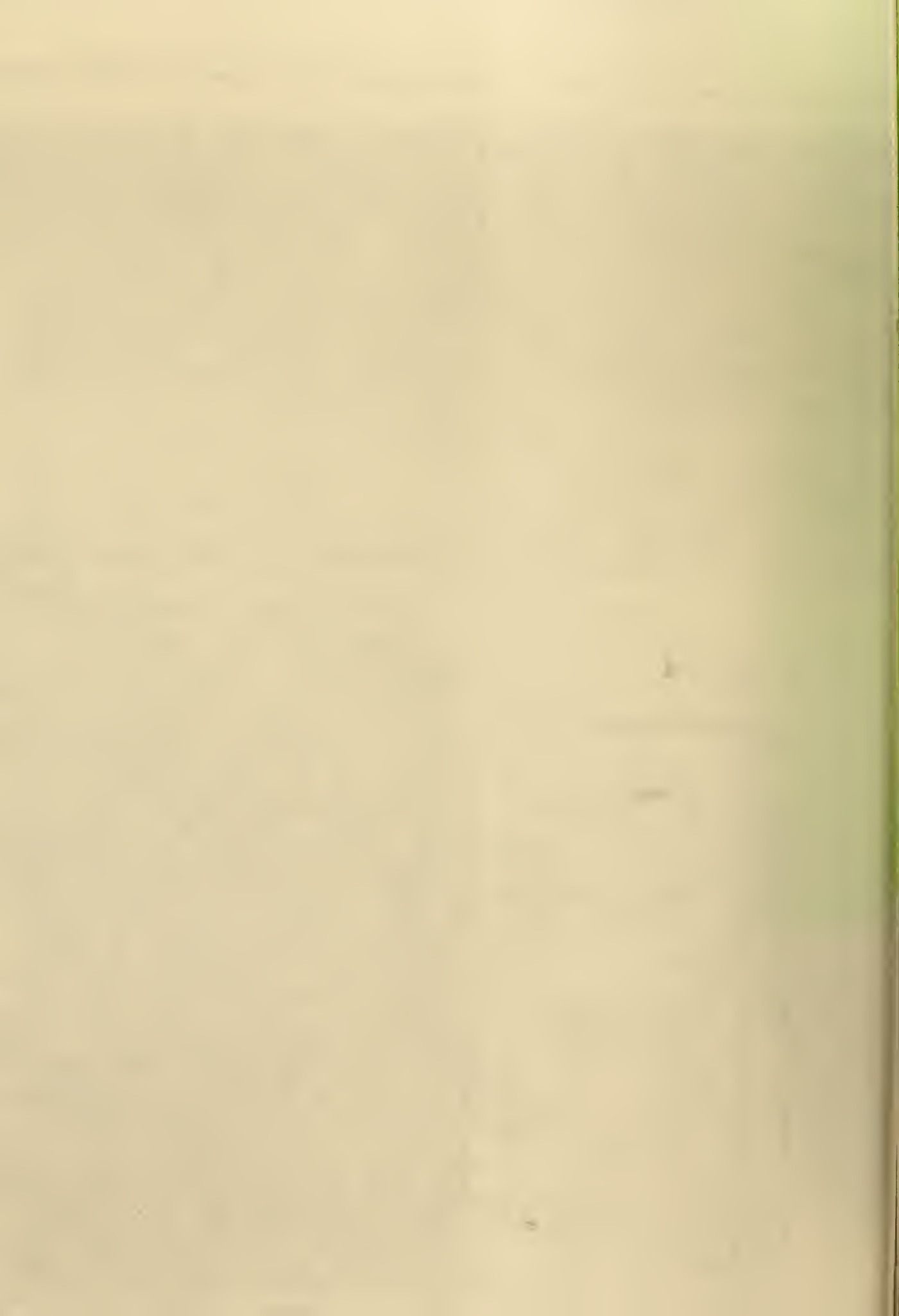
The existing roadway alignment closely parallels the Stillwater River and East Rosebud Creek, precluding major alignment shifts to the west. Additionally, a large portion of the irrigated land located west of the existing highway has been designated Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Attempting to relocate any significant length of the reconstructed highway into this farmland area would prove contrary to the Farmland Protection Policy Act. The purpose of the act is to minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Additionally, the Stillwater City-County Planning Board together with the Soil Conservation Service has requested that pasture land, rather than irrigated land, be used wherever possible.

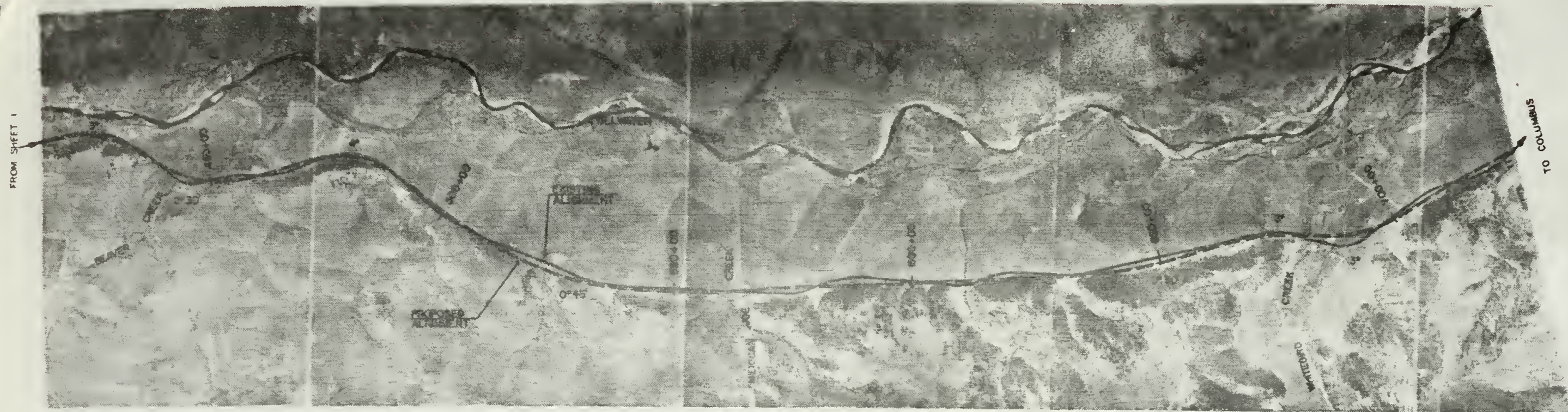
The dry shrublands east of the highway with their west-facing exposure provide the majority of cover habitat for local deer populations. This fact, together with the steep terrain and location of many irrigation ditches, preclude the option of shifting the alignment a great deal to the east.

Therefore, in general, adverse impacts caused by reconstruction and relocation of Montana Route 78 will be minimized by utilizing the existing highway corridor where possible. Improving the horizontal and vertical alignments to meet current design standards will be accomplished by flattening or eliminating many of the existing curves as shown on Figures 6 and 7.







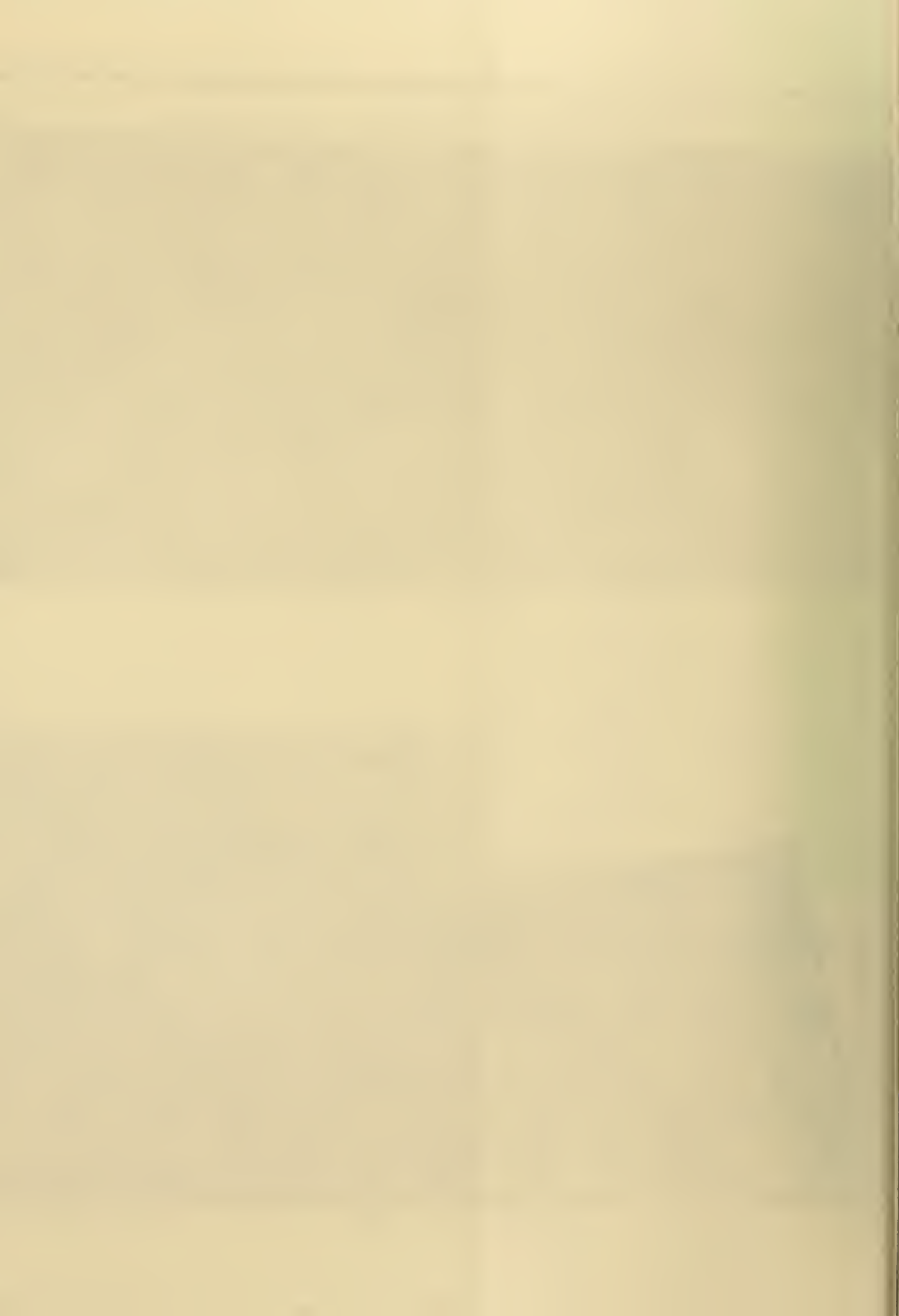


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ABSAROKEE to
COLUMBUS

FIGURE 7
PROPOSED ALIGNMENT



Deviation from the existing alignment will be most significant near the end of the project immediately south of Columbus at MP 45.4±. In this area the existing highway consists of a 12 degree compound curve with extremely limited sight distance. The steep terrain south of the curve causes a shading problem that results in unexpected icy conditions. This area has been identified as an accident cluster site by the Montana Department of Highways.

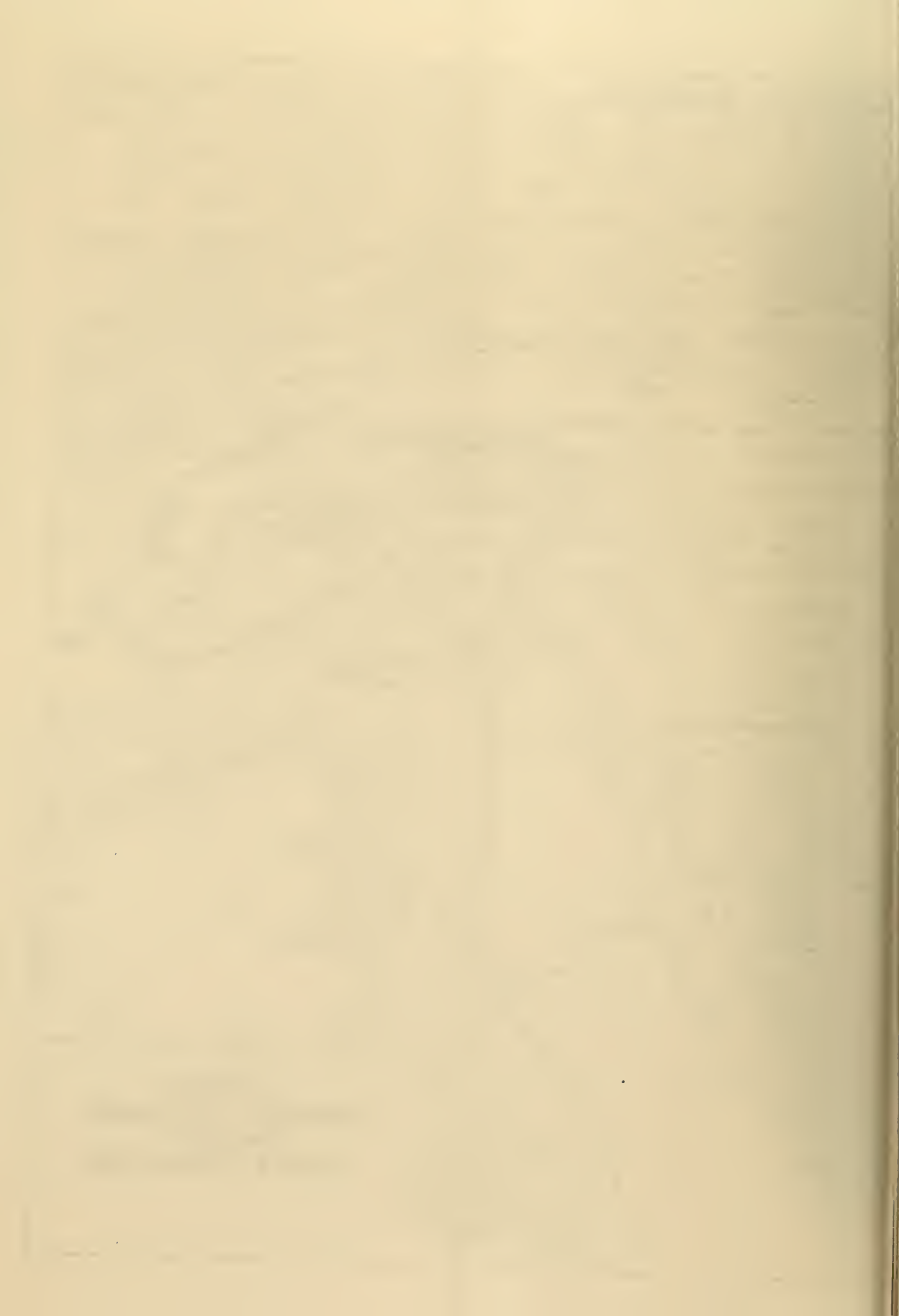
Considering the amount of construction required to meet design standards in this area and concerns expressed by nearby residents, alternative alignments have been evaluated for reconstruction of the existing curve. 2½, 2¾, 3, 4, and 4¾ degree curves were considered to replace the existing curve in this location. Following preliminary review of these alignments, only the 2¾ and 4¾ degree alternatives were considered to be viable options requiring further analysis (Figure 8). The preliminary review was based on impacts to wetlands, existing residences, topography and potential historic sites.

Alternate A would utilize a 2¾ degree horizontal curve, providing a more ideal horizontal alignment. While requiring substantial cut and fill quantities, the 2¾ degree curve would place the roadway further south into the hillside. This alternate, by virtue of it's degree of curvature and final profile grade would reduce the shading of the roadway surface to the greatest extent. Alternate A would require a maximum grade of four per cent. Due to the extensive amount of rock excavation required as well as other geotechnical considerations, construction of alternate A could cost an additional two million dollars compared to Alternate B.

Alternate B, the preferred alternate, utilizes the maximum degree of curvature prescribed under the applicable design standards in an effort to minimize the impact on the hillside. The 4¾ degree alternate would require a maximum grade of two per cent in the area of the reconstructed curve. Alternate B was chosen as the preferred alternate after considering geotechnical aspects, public input, construction cost, wetlands impacts and historic/cultural resource impacts. Overall the impacts associated with Alternate B are less than those for Alternate A.

A final alternative which is considered in this environmental assessment is the "no-build" alternative. This alternative implies no activities beyond the continued routine maintenance of the existing roadway facility. The "no-build" alternative would not satisfy the objectives of the proposed action as identified in the "Purpose and Need" chapter of this environmental assessment in that it would not be capable of handling projected traffic demands and loads and would not enhance highway safety and convenience.





IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

The proposed project is located on Montana Route 78 in southcentral Montana in Stillwater County. The project location and vicinity are shown on Figures 1 and 2. The southern project terminus is located at a point approximately 5.7 miles south of Absarokee, Montana, near milepost 26.9. The project corridor extends northeasterly 19.1 miles to its northern terminus near the intersection with FAS 421 immediately south of Columbus, Montana near milepost 46.0.

North of Absarokee the project follows the eastern edge of the Stillwater River valley, generally $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the river. Dry ponderosa pine shrublands occur east of the highway with the majority of land to the west being irrigated farmland. South of Absarokee the highway follows the east edge of the East Rosebud Creek bottomland with irrigated farmland primarily to the east. There are several clusters of non-farm homesites along the project corridor as well as other individual residences.

HISTORIC

A cultural resource inventory has been performed along the project corridor (Historical Research Associates, July 1988). In association with the cultural resource inventory, a limited amount of archeological testing was performed at site number 24ST89, the site of the Crow Agency between 1875 and 1883. The results of the testing proved inconclusive. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been consulted regarding the cultural resource inventory findings.

Among rural sites evaluated in the cultural resource inventory, excluding irrigation ditches, only the Riverside Inn (24ST164) and Structure 1 of the Petosa Homestead (24ST171) are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The integrity of most of the other sites (which consist predominantly of ranches) has been compromised by the addition of new buildings and/or the remodeling of historic structures. In some instances, the rural character or setting of sites have been destroyed by the establishment of new housing subdivisions in the near vicinity.

Six of the irrigation ditches recorded during the inventory are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as contributing elements of the Lower Stillwater River Historic irrigation district. These ditches include the Agency Ditch, Shane Ditch, Kem-Mulherin Ditch, Roadhouse Ditch, Scott Ditch and the White Ditch.

Ten of the 30 buildings recorded within the town of Absarokee are National Register eligible (24ST176, 178, 181, 183-187, 190, 199). Two previously recorded sites are located within the town of Absarokee, both of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (24ST76 and 24ST87).

The historic sites, as they relate to the project alternatives, will be discussed in more detail in the "Environmental Consequences" chapter of this report.

LAND USE AND ECONOMY

Land use in the project area is predominantly agricultural, both irrigated cropland and nonirrigated pasture land. Although there is currently no zoning for land use along the project corridor, a trend has been developing over the past 10 to 15 years. Lands previously used for agricultural purposes are being divided and developed as individual residences. There are several factors influencing this trend. People

desiring a country home life live in the area and commute to work in Billings approximately 45 miles to the east or to Columbus at the north end of the project. Many homesites are owned by out-of-state interests. In addition, the Stillwater Mining Company has recently developed a platinum and palladium mine about 45 miles southwest of Columbus near Nye. The region is also influenced by the recreational aspects of the Absaroka Mountains to the south and the Stillwater River, which parallels the majority of the project's length.

This trend of land use change has slowed somewhat compared to a few years ago; however, it is continuing at a steady rate. The platinum-palladium mine near Nye is in the process of doubling their work force and plans to operate for 20 years. There is a subdivision being developed just west of Absarokee, along FAS 420, specifically aimed at providing housing for mine workers. Although this subdivision is not adjacent to FAP 78 and there is no direct access onto FAP 78, it could produce a significant increase in turning movement activity at the junction of FAS 420 and FAP 78.

The Town of Absarokee lies above the confluence of Rosebud Creek and the Stillwater River. The existing highway serves as the main street of Absarokee and passes through both residential and commercial sections of town. Absarokee serves as the commercial center of the area with the commercial section in general located on the north end of town and the residential area primarily on the south end of town. Additionally, Absarokee provides educational facilities for the area. The existing schools are located on the south end of town with a new school facility planned for construction beginning in the fall of 1988. The new facility will be located several blocks south of the existing school directly across the highway from the school's athletic field. Absarokee also offers recreational facilities in the form of a park and swimming pool.

Recreational opportunities in the project vicinity include numerous fishing access sites on the Stillwater and Yellowstone Rivers, scenic camping areas as well as the Custer National Forest and the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness.

The economic conditions in this portion of Stillwater County are greatly influenced by the agricultural and mining industries and recreation activities. Recently the mining industry has been expanding and the agricultural sector has been declining slightly. Construction, manufacturing, trade, service, government, finance, insurance, real estate, transportation, communication and utility sectors of the economy have been relatively stable.

TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Montana Route 78 connects with Interstate 90 immediately north of Columbus, Montana, and with U.S. Highway 212 at Red Lodge, Montana. Montana Rail Link's railroad line in the Columbus area provides the only other major transportation facilities in the project area, providing freight hauling services. The nearest airport providing air carrier service is located in Billings. A smaller airport serving private aircraft is located at Columbus.

UTILITIES

Utility services along the existing highway alignment include telephone, cable television, natural gas, and electrical service. Mountain Bell, Project Telephone Company, Absarokee Cable TV, Montana Power Company and Beartooth Electric Cooperative, Inc. operate and maintain these facilities. Water and sanitary sewer service is provided to residents in Absarokee through the Absarokee Water Users Corporation and the Absarokee Sewer District.

LANDFORM AND VEGETATION

Montana Highway 78 traverses the Stillwater River basin, a major, perennial tributary of the Yellowstone River. Most of the project area is rural in character, the exception being the short segment that bisects the small community of Absarokee.

Beginning at the south end of the project, the Present Traveled Way (PTW) is located on level bottom lands between Butcher Creek and the East Fork of Rosebud Creek. Here, the drainage bottom is wide and level and is used as irrigated cropland, with water diverted from both Butcher Creek and the East Fork of Rosebud Creek.

Below the confluence of the East and West Forks of Rosebud Creek lies the Town of Absarokee. The town is located in a fairly narrow part of the drainage bottom and is bordered by the Rosebud Creek channel on the west and the steep edge of a flattopped ridge on the east.

Rosebud Creek joins the Stillwater River immediately north of Absarokee. From this point northward, the project corridor parallels the east side of the Stillwater River valley until the last mile, where the roadway makes a right-angle turn to the east, away from the course of the Stillwater, and parallels the south bank of the Yellowstone River.

The Stillwater River bottom is much wider than that of Rosebud Creek. Below the confluence of the two streams, the Stillwater River channel is located along the west edge of the valley bottom. The PTW is located adjacent to the east edge of the valley, where it parallels the base of steep, dissected slopes. The area between the PTW and the river channel slopes gently to the northwest. This intervening area is used as irrigated

cropland much of which has been designated Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Figure 9). Many irrigation canals parallel and cross the PTW, and provide water to these fields.

The dissected side slopes of ridge and bench lands adjacent to the east side of the valley and the PTW are moderately to sparsely timbered with pine and juniper, and are used primarily for livestock grazing.

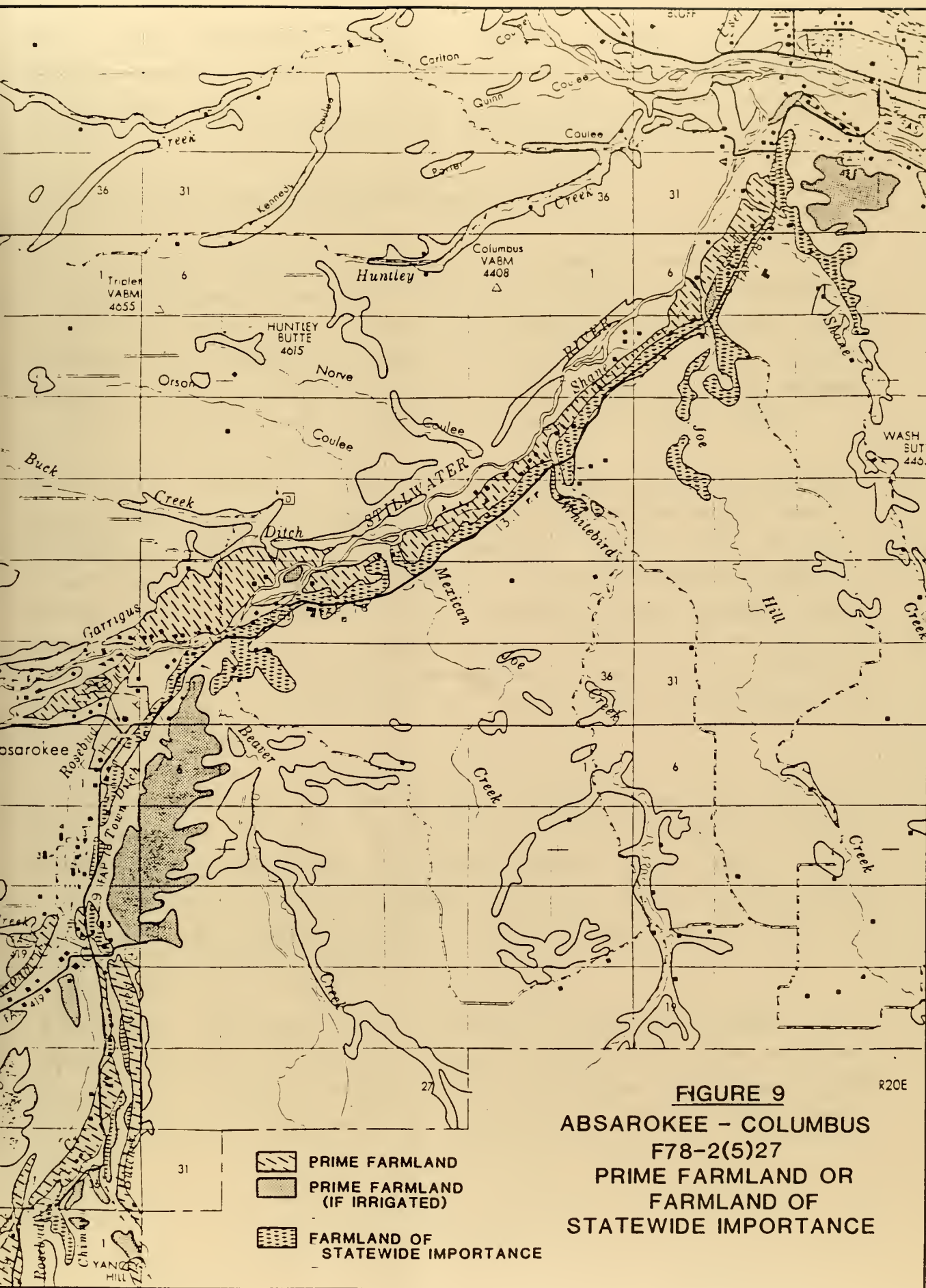


FIGURE 9
ABSAROOKEE - COLUMBUS
F78-2(5)27
PRIME FARMLAND OR
FARMLAND OF
STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE

R20E



The local predominate geologic features in the project area include exposures of the Cretaceous Hell Creek and Tertiary Fort Union Formations. The subgrade soils are predominately sandy lean clays with some areas of silty sands and gravels.

WATER RESOURCES/FLOODPLAINS/WETLANDS

The existing highway alignment crosses several streams including Chimney Creek, Butcher Creek, Beaver Creek, Whitebird Creek, Mexican Joe Creek, Joe Hill Creek and Shane Creek, while paralleling East Rosebud Creek and the Stillwater River. These streams drain watersheds that vary in size from 1.5 square miles at Chimney Creek to 40 square miles at Butcher Creek.

Stillwater County has adopted Floodplain Development Regulations for delineated floodplains within the county and is currently participating in the Regular Phase of the National Flood Insurance Program. Floodplains have been delineated for Beaver Creek, Butcher Creek, East Rosebud Creek, Rosebud Creek, Shane Creek, Whitebird Creek and the Stillwater River in the project area. A Floodplain Management Permit will be obtained from the county prior to any construction activities in floodplain areas.

Irrigation ditches in the project area include the Butcher Creek-Rosebud Ditch, Eggen-Piper Ditch, Agency Ditch, Sylvester-Beasley Ditch, Roadhouse Ditch, Scott Ditch, Town Ditch, Nichols Ditch, Kem-Mulherin Ditch, White Ditch, Shane Ditch and the Whitebird Ditch. These ditches are the basis of a system of flood irrigation.

A wetland evaluation and biological assessment (ECON Inc., 1988) identified 24 sites (Figures 10 and 11) meeting at least one of the criteria required to be considered a wetland based on the Montana Department of Highways guidelines. Three basic

types of wetland communities exist along the highway reconstruction corridor. The most common type is the small, intermittent stream riparian habitats. The second most common type includes the East Rosebud Creek streambottom complex which skirts the existing highway south of Absarokee. The least common are the cattail marsh stands, of which three were identified in the project area.

Of the wetland sites identified, the wetlands of greatest importance would be the two cattail stands just south of the Yellowstone River bridge - sites 22 and 24. Other wetlands of importance include the cattail marsh stand south of Absarokee - site 8; the East Rosebud Creek streambottom - sites 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10; and the large, undisturbed riparian upland shrub area near the north end of the project - sites 19, 20 and 21. Within the general project area, livestock grazing and colonization by naturalized pasture grasses have altered many of the wetland-riparian communities. It is difficult to predict the structure and composition of the sites in the absence of these two modifying factors.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been consulted regarding the presence of threatened or endangered species in the project area. The USFWS has determined that bald eagles (*Haliaeetus Leucocephalus*) are winter residents and migrants along the Yellowstone and Stillwater Rivers. Although peregrine falcons (*Falco Peregrinus*) historically nested near Columbus, there have been no verified nesting attempts in recent years. Peregrine falcons may occur in the project area as migrants. The wetland evaluation and biological assessment (ECON, Inc., 1988) prepared in accordance with Section 7(C) of the Endangered Species Act Amendment of 1978 supports the USFWS findings concerning threatened or endangered species.

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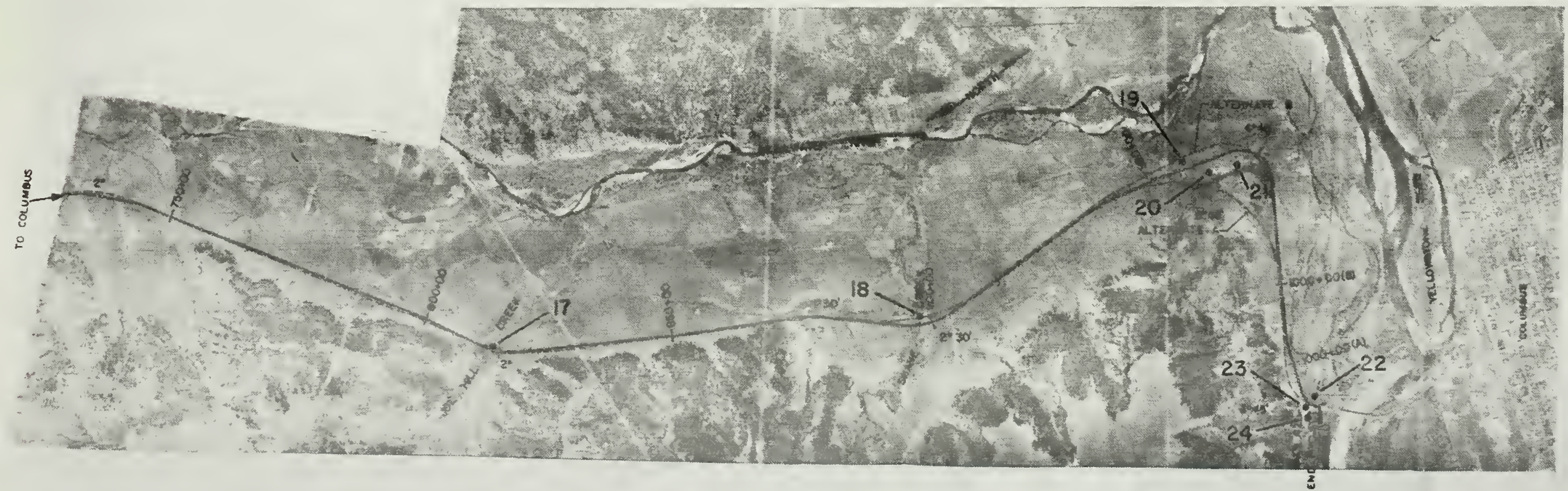
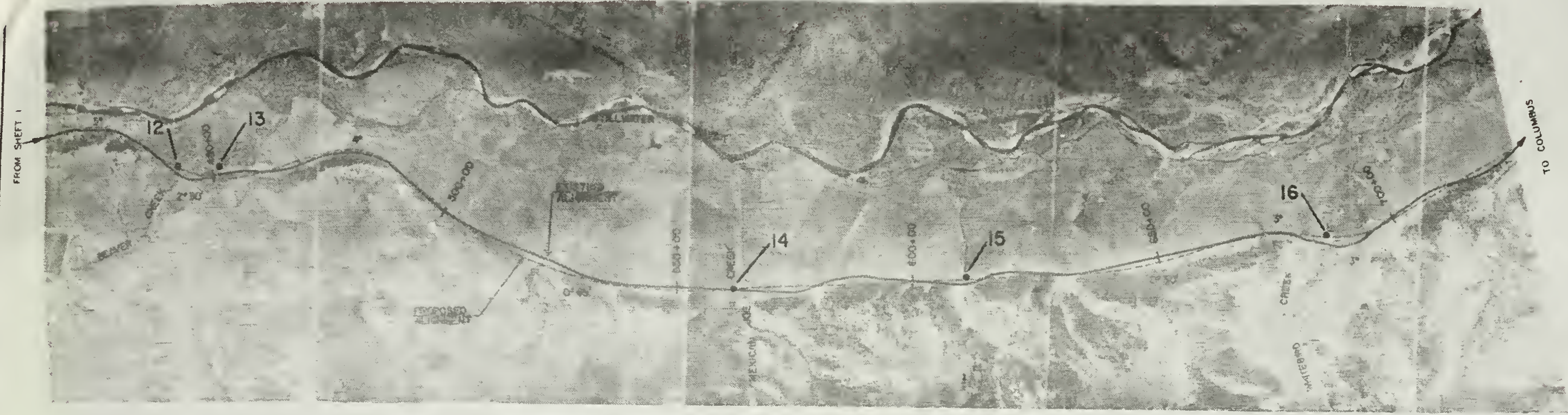
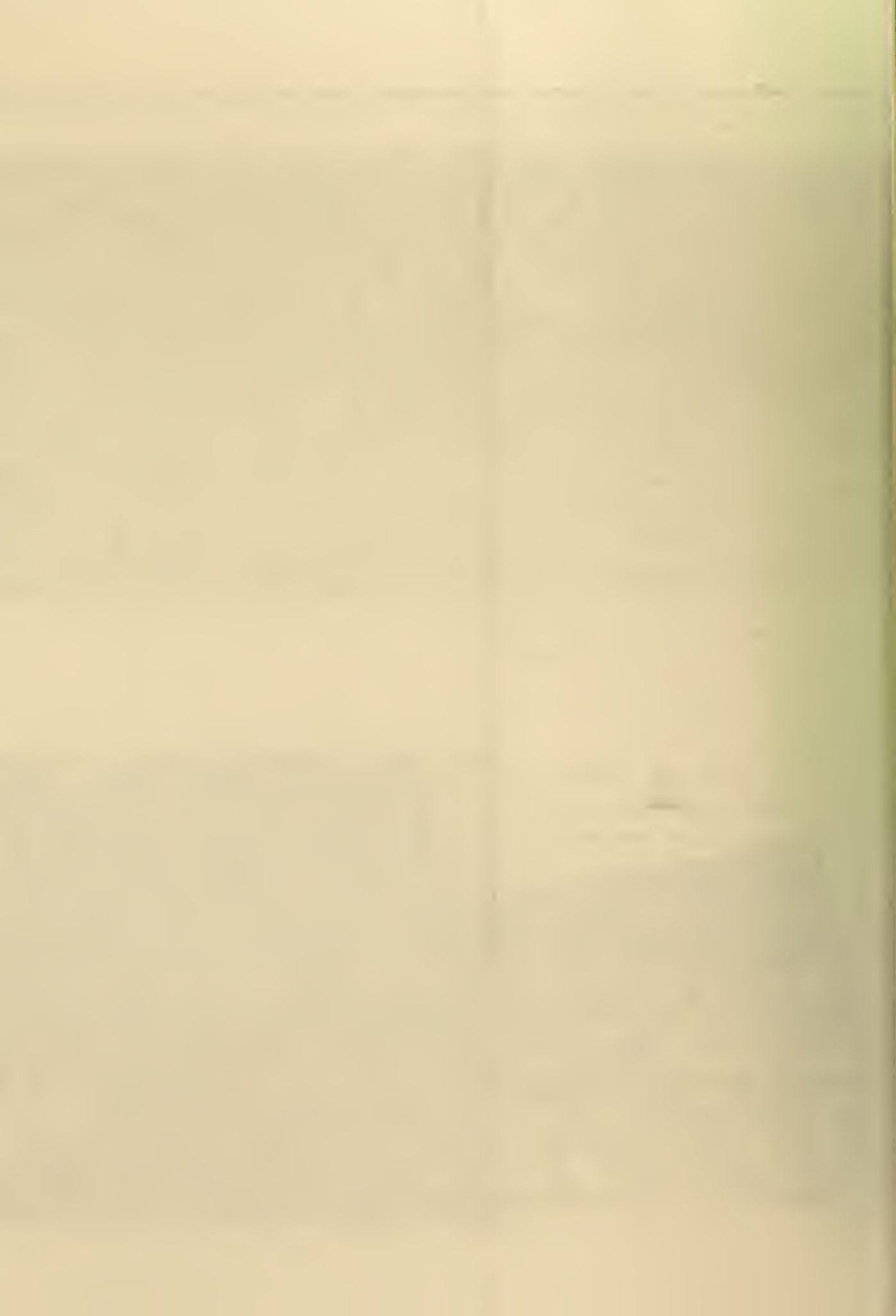


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F 78-2(5) 27
ABSAROOKEE to
COLUMBUS

FIGURE 11
WETLAND SITES





F 78-2(5) 27
 ABSAROKEE to
 COLUMBUS
 FIGURE 10
 WETLAND SITES

The project area supports populations of white-tailed deer, mule deer and an occasional black bear. Smaller mammals inhabiting the area include the raccoon, fox, skunk, porcupine, coyote, beaver, muskrat and assorted small rodents.

A variety of bird species inhabit the project area, particularly those Passerine species normally found in foothill habitat subjected to intensive ranching and agriculture. Brewer's blackbirds are common along the roadside where they nest in the grasses or shrubs. Other blackbirds (grackles, red-winged and cowbirds) are also common to the area. Yellow-headed blackbirds are known to inhabit a marshy area near the north end of the project. Some other species common to the area are robins, rufous-sided towhees, yellow warblers, flickers and house wrens. Game birds inhabiting the general area are gray partridges and sharp-tailed grouse. Pheasants inhabit the area, but because of intensive land use, probably are not numerous. Wilson's snipe are common to the area and occasionally mallards are seen in association with water areas.

The project area, from approximately 1.5 miles northeast of Absarokee to 1 mile south of Columbus, parallels the lower Stillwater River. The existing road follows along the base of the foothills to the south and east of the river. Within this section, five small tributaries (Beaver Creek, Mexican Joe Creek, Whitebird Creek, Joe Hill Creek and Shane Creek) flow under the road and into the Stillwater from the south and east. The principal sport fish reportedly found in the lower Stillwater River are mountain whitefish, rainbow, brown and brook trout (Fishes of Montana, C.J.D. Brown). These same species potentially could be found in some of the above tributaries, at least seasonally. However, the size and distance from the river of the above named tributaries and the intensive land use surrounding them, suggests that numbers of fish/unit of water would be low.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES

There will be no direct impact to energy or mineral resources during reconstruction of the highway. The area to the southwest has a long history of mineral development. The only active operation is the Stillwater Mining Company's platinum and palladium mine near Nye with access by FAS 419 and FAS 420. Recently, there has been some renewed interest in mining the chromite deposits in the area near Nye. The area to the southeast near Red Lodge has a long history in coal mining but there are no active operations at the present time.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The proposed action will not have any significant social or economic impacts regardless of which alternative is implemented. This reconstruction project primarily involves upgrading the existing deteriorated facility to more modern standards to improve safety and provide a roadway capable of adequately handling projected traffic loads. There will be some short term beneficial economic impacts to the local communities during the construction period. The Stillwater County Planning Director has advised that there are no ethnic or minority groups or neighborhoods along the proposed route. It is not anticipated that there will be any divisive and disruptive effects on the community.

RELOCATION IMPACTS

The residential character along the rural portion of the project corridor can be summarized as established residential dwellings and outbuildings associated with the ranches in the area, interspersed with newer homes built on smaller acreages subdivided within the last 15 years. Typically the newer homes are located close to the existing highway, often adjacent to it, while the older homes associated with the ranches are located a greater distance from the existing highway. The urban portion of the project passes through Absarokee and consists of residences and businesses. Residents of the area consist of working families and retirees.

Alternate A would require the relocation of an estimated five residential dwellings, twelve other buildings and no businesses.

Alternate B would require the relocation of an estimated six residential buildings, thirteen other buildings and no businesses.

Table 2
ESTIMATED RELOCATION IMPACTS

<u>Alternate</u>	<u>Residential</u> <u>Displacements</u>	<u>Commercial</u> <u>Displacements</u>	<u>Other</u> <u>Buildings</u>
A	1 - Lt. Sta. 382±	0	3 Lt. Sta. 112±
	1 - Rt. Sta. 527±		1 Rt. Sta. 192±
	1 - Lt. Sta. 681±		2 Rt. Sta. 527±
	1 - Lt. Sta. 996±		2 Lt. Sta. 681±
	1 - Rt. Sta. 1006±		3 Lt. Sta. 996±
			1 Rt. Sta. 1006±
B	1 - Lt. Sta. 382±	0	3 Lt. Sta. 112±
	1 - Rt. Sta. 527±		1 Rt. Sta. 192±
	1 - Lt. Sta. 681±		2 Rt. Sta. 572±
	1 - Rt. Sta. 1009±		2 Lt. Sta. 681±
	1 - Rt. Sta. 1018±		4 Rt. Sta. 1009±
	1 - Lt. Sta. 973±		1 Rt. Sta. 1018±
<u>TOTALS</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
A	5	0	12
B	6	0	13

Neither alternate would require the relocation of any residences or businesses in Absarokee.

All persons displaced by this project will be eligible for relocation assistance regardless of age, race, color, religion, gender, or national origin. Relocation payments would be provided for moving expenses, housing supplements when indicated, and certain miscellaneous expenses. This relocation assistance will be provided in accordance with The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 as amended.

There is limited replacement housing available in the project area, however there is land available in the general vicinity for moving structures or building replacement homes.

The construction of either alternate will require the modification of a number of approaches. Access will be perpetuated to the extent practicable.

The no build alternative would not require any relocations or any approach modifications.

LAND USE IMPACTS

This project is not expected to cause any significant changes in land use along the project corridor or promote significant new development in the area.

TRAFFIC IMPACTS

The reconstruction of Montana Route 78 is not expected to generate a significant amount of additional traffic beyond the normal increases that would occur with the "no-build" alternative. Overall, Alternative A or B will have a beneficial impact on traffic operations in the form of improved safety and convenience and reduced user costs. The new highway

facility will feature a wider roadway with 12 foot wide traffic lanes and 4 foot wide paved shoulders north of the intersection with FAS 419; and 12 foot wide lanes with 2 foot shoulders south of the intersection. Sight distance will also be improved. 1988 average daily traffic volume is approximately 1500 vehicles per day. Since construction of the project will probably not be completed until around 1992, the design year is Year 2012. Projected traffic volumes for the design year are 2500 vehicles per day.

The "no-build" alternative would do nothing to improve traffic operations. The accident rate, which is already higher than the statewide average for primary routes, would likely continue to increase as traffic volumes increase.

AIR QUALITY IMPACTS

The State Air Quality Bureau was consulted about potential air quality impacts resulting from the reconstruction of Montana Route 78. In general, any project which will smooth out traffic flow, and reduce stopping and idling time will also reduce the amount of air pollution emissions from transportation sources.

NOISE IMPACTS

On July 14 and 15, 1987 ambient noise readings were taken at seven locations along the length of the project. Locations where chosen to be representative of those structures and activities which would be most susceptible to adverse noise levels. Locations selected included five residences: two south of Absarokee, two north of Absarokee and one within the town limits. Also selected were a church and school within Absarokee. Projected design hour traffic volumes used to

predict the design hour noise levels vary from 330 vehicles just south of Columbus, to 254 vehicles in and near Absarokee, to 91 vehicles at the south end of the project. The number of trucks was determined to be consistent throughout at 7.4%.

The following are the measured and predicted noise levels for each location:

Table 3
NOISE LEVEL SUMMARY

Loc.	M.P.	Speed	Dist.	Structure	%	Measured	Adjusted	Design Year
		MPH	From C.L.	Type		L10 dBA	Present	2012 Pk. Hr.
					Trucks		L10 dBA	L10 dBA
1	29.0	55	46'	Residence	7.4	55	55	56
2	30.2	55	149'	Residence	7.4	55	56	58
3	32.6	30	78'	School	7.4	59	59	60
4	32.8	30	52'	Church	7.4	59	59	61
5	33.0	30	34'	Residence	7.4	64	64	66
6	39.7	55	80'	Residence	7.4	57	59	62
7	45.9	55	52'	Residence	7.4	61	64	67

Existing and projected noise levels for this project do not appear to be excessive. The maximum acceptable exterior noise level for schools, churches and residences is L10 = 70 dBA. Existing and future noise levels for all locations studied are well below this maximum.

The proposed action will not have any significant impact on noise levels in the project area.

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL IMPACTS

Several sites have been determined to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The location of these sites is shown on Figures 12 and 13.

Site Number 24ST164 is the Riverside Inn. Located approximately two miles north of Absarokee on the east bank of the Stillwater River, the site contains the remains of the original Riverside Inn which has been converted to a house. Other structures included in the site are two garages, a shed, a generator housing, two barns and a concrete slab.

The site is currently divided by a county road with different ownership of the north and south sections of the site. The south part of the site is in very good condition. This complex of structures clearly represents the "working component" of an early ranching endeavor, established prior to 1910.

Perhaps the primary area of significance at the site is that it functions as a local landmark and as a representation of a community gathering place. In the 1920's and 1930's, people from Absarokee and the surrounding area gathered at the Riverside Inn for Saturday night dances in the barn, and dinner at the Inn on the north side of the county road.

In addition to the significance of the site as a local gathering place, the main barn possesses individual architectural distinction. This building is a good example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture popular in the United States between approximately 1880 and 1955.

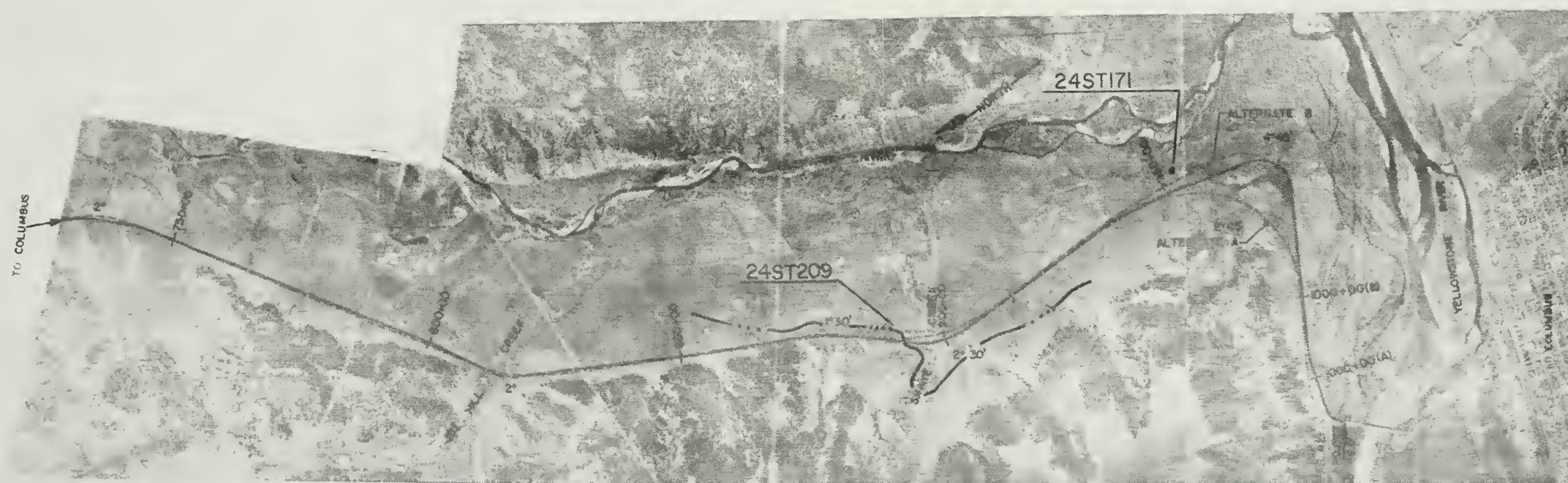
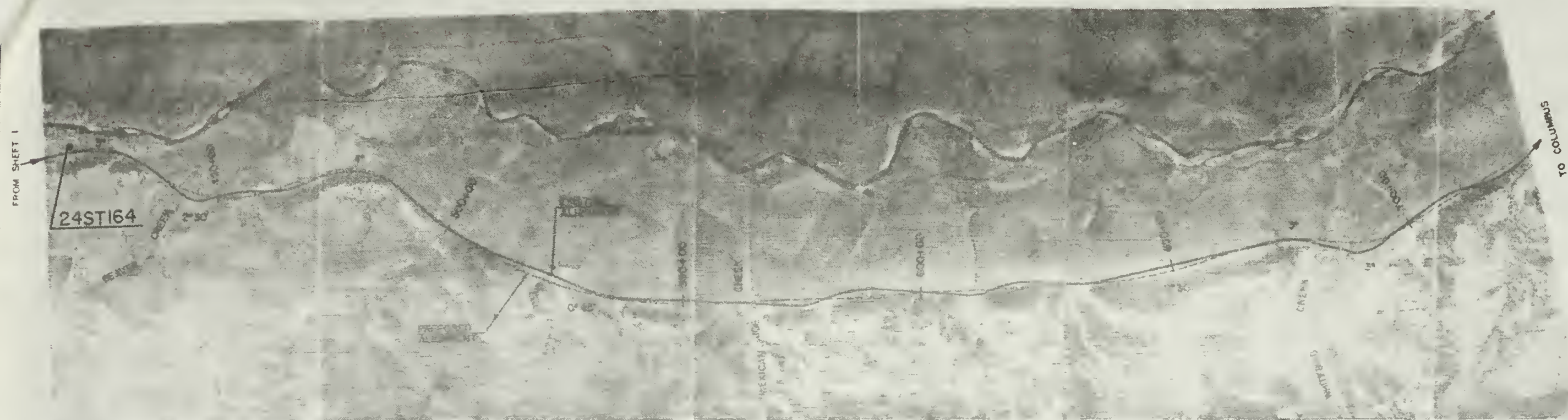
The portion of the site that lies north of the county road has been altered to the point where it no longer represents the historic events with which it is associated. The north portion is not included in the National Register site boundary.

The For

STATE	PROJECT NUMBER	SHEET NO
MONTANA	F 78-2(5) 27	1 OF 2



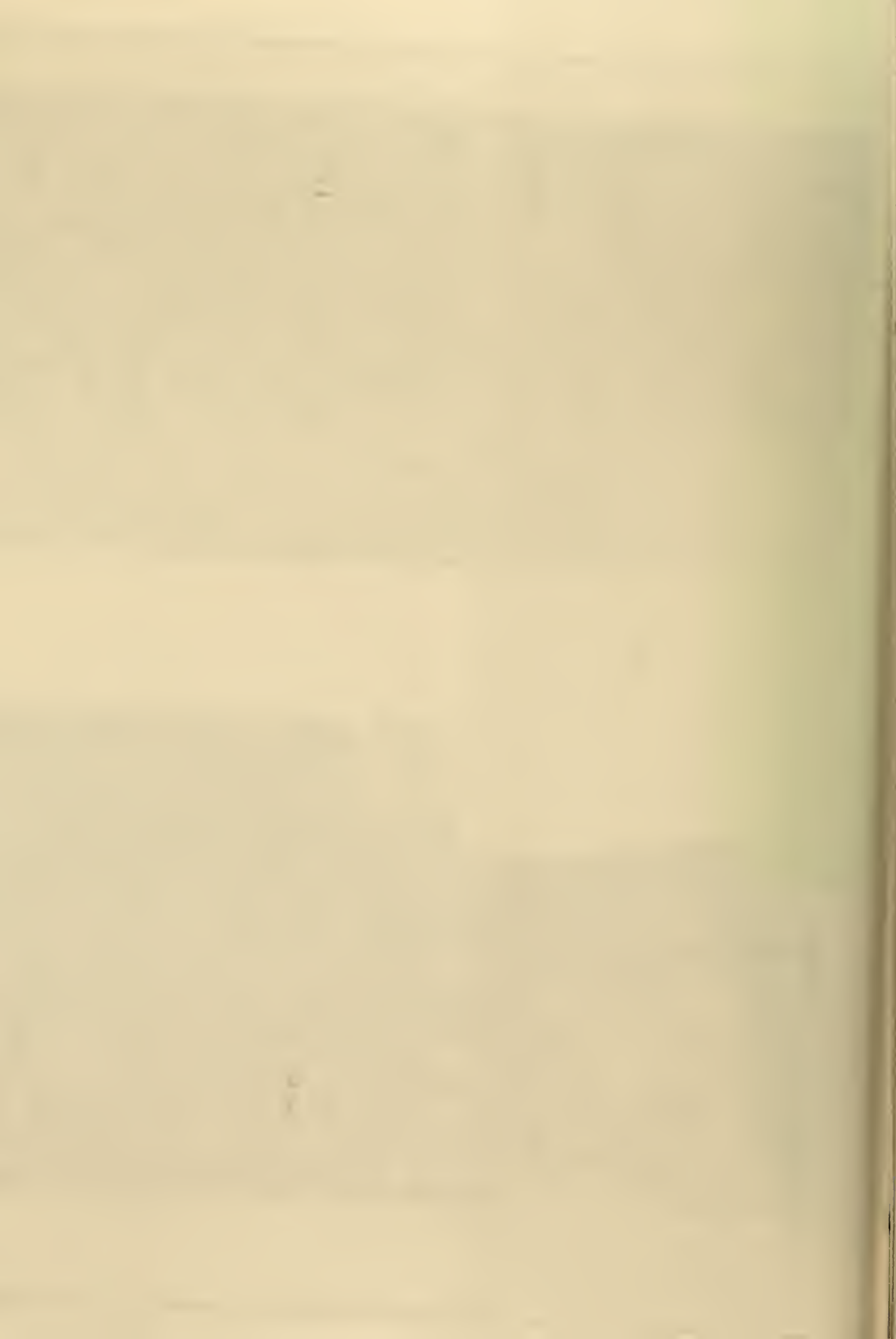




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F 78-2(5) 27
ABSAROKEE to
COLUMBUS
FIGURE 13
HISTORIC / CULTURAL
SITES



The Riverside Inn site is located adjacent to the west edge of the existing highway right-of-way. A steep hillside and the Kem-Mulherin irrigation ditch to the east, together with the Riverside Inn, the Stillwater River, and the Roadhouse irrigation ditch to the west preclude any major alignment shifts. With the location of the proposed alignment dictated by roadside constraints, and essentially in the same location as the PTW, the construction of a wider highway facility will mean encroachment onto the Riverside Inn site is unavoidable.

The encroachment will consist of the construction limits extending beyond the southeastern boundary of the site. The north portion of the site will not be impacted. None of the existing structures will be affected. The total amount of disturbed area on the southern portion of the site is estimated to be 0.34 acres.

The cobblestone residence (Structure 1) at the Pasquale Petosa Homestead/Bare Ranch, Site Number 24ST171, is a one and one-half story, wood frame building, finished on the exterior walls with river cobbles. Modifications made to the original structure include a steel sided addition, two interior cinder block chimneys, enameled metal roofing, and a solar panel on the roof. The house is part of a 1914-patented homestead at which most of the historic-age structures have suffered loss of integrity.

Although the initial cultural resources inventory recommended that the entire site be considered ineligible because of poor integrity, the State Historic Preservation Office has stated that Structure 1 is probably eligible to the National Register of Historic Places for its distinctive use of local materials.

Both Alternates A and B would locate the proposed centerline closer to the structure than the existing PTW. Neither alternate would have a direct impact to the structure.

The Lower Stillwater River Historic Irrigation District consists of six ditches built before the turn of the century, most by families or groups of families who were attempting to improve agricultural production on their homesteads. The six ditches are the Agency Ditch (24ST204), Shane Ditch (24ST209), Kem-Mulherin Ditch (24ST205), Roadhouse Ditch (24ST206), Scott Ditch (24ST208), and White Ditch (24ST210). Throughout the majority of their lengths, the ditches are simple unlined features.

The areas elaborate pattern of irrigation ditches in relation to the natural and man-made landscapes of fields and pastures is representative of an important aspect of agricultural settlement in the state. The period of significance is 1875 to 1920. The beginning corresponds with establishment of a permanent Crow Agency (and construction of the Agency Ditch), and the end with the end of the second land rush in the Stillwater Basin.

Portions of each of the six irrigation ditches will be relocated as a part of the proposed action. Wherever possible, the proposed alignment has been located to minimize impacts to these existing irrigation systems. The location of these ditches combined with the consideration given to design standards, existing residences, land use, floodplain encroachment, wetlands and other historic sites makes avoidance impossible. The proposed action will involve intermittent conflicts with the ditches totalling approximately 1600 feet of the Agency Ditch, 2050 feet of the Kem-Mulherin Ditch, 6900 feet of the Roadhouse Ditch, 5000 feet of the Scott Ditch, 800 feet of the Shane Ditch and 600 feet of the White Ditch.

The final twelve historic sites are all structures located within the Town of Absarokee.

These sites are not discussed in detail here because the proposed action in Absarokee consists of an overlay of the existing pavement and will not impact any of the sites.

The cultural resource inventory identified a small piece of undisturbed pasture near Site 24ST171 along Alternate B. This small piece of intact terrace may contain some intact rock features. Selection of Alternative B will necessitate further testing in the area, to determine whether or not the large cobbles that outcrop on the surface of the terrace represent natural or cultural features. A testing program for this potential site has been scheduled to be performed concurrently with a supplementary cultural resource inventory. The additional cultural resource inventory will encompass an additional one-half mile in length that was added to the south end of the project.

The "no-build" alternative would not have any adverse impacts on any historical or cultural sites.

Should other historical or cultural resources be discovered during construction, measures will be taken to protect such findings in accordance with the Montana Department of Highways Standard Specifications.

SCHOOLS, PARKS & RECREATION IMPACTS

Existing schools in the project area are located in Absarokee. The proposed action will have no impact on existing schools. A new school facility is under development several blocks south

of the existing school, directly across the highway from the existing athletic field. The proposed action will require some additional right-of-way to be purchased from the school district in the area of the new school as well as the area of the existing athletic field. Due to early coordination with the school district, the action will have minimal impact on the new school location while at the same time, minimizing impact to the athletic field already in existence west of the highway. The proposed alignment will require a ballfield recently developed on the south portion of the new school site be reoriented. The new school site plan and the proposed location of the reconstructed highway will allow the ballfield to remain on the south portion of the new school site.

Presently, students utilizing the facilities located at the athletic field walk south along the east edge of the highway, crossing the highway near the athletic field. This pedestrian traffic will increase following completion of the new school as students attending classes in the new school will be walking to and from the existing school facility for lunch. Pedestrian impacts will be minimized by construction of eight foot shoulders from Willow Street south to the location of the new school. An alternative solution would be to gain access to Montana Avenue from the east side of the new school site allowing pedestrian traffic to walk along Montana Avenue rather than on the highway shoulder.

The proposed action will have no impact on any park facilities in the project area.

In response to the Montana Department of Highways' initial letter of intent, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks expressed concern over possible impacts to four fishing access sites (FAS) located on the Stillwater River. These

sites are: Itch-Kep-pe FAS, Fireman's Point FAS, Swinging Bridge FAS, and Whitebird FAS. Each of these sites is located beyond the construction limits of this project and will not be affected.

The Stillwater City-County Planning Board advised that a group of citizens made a special request during their Community Needs Assessment process for a bicycle path from Absarokee to Columbus. Construction of such a facility is not felt to be justified at the present time. However, the new roadway will feature wider traffic lanes and four-foot wide shoulders. The horizontal and vertical alignments will also be improved. Therefore, the proposed highway facility should generally provide for safer travel by bicyclists and motorists alike. Provisions will be made for the future widening of the roadway to provide a 40 foot width with eight-foot wide shoulders. New structures will be constructed to the 40 foot width initially. However, the existing structure over the Yellowstone River south of Columbus is only 24 feet wide. No improvements are planned to this structure as part of this project.

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLAND IMPACTS

A large portion of the irrigated land located west of the existing highway has been designated Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. In order to comply with the Farmland Protection Policy Act, the proposed alignment has been chosen to utilize dry shrublands and pasture land rather than irrigated land wherever possible thereby minimizing the amount of land that will be converted to non-agricultural uses. Improving the horizontal and vertical alignments of the existing facility while at the same time minimizing the impact on existing residences and irrigation systems will result in the loss of some of this land.

STREAM MODIFICATION & WATER QUALITY IMPACTS

Water quality impacts on this project are expected to be very minor in nature as several of the stream crossings including Chimney Creek, Mexican Joe Creek and Whitebird Creek are dry during a large percentage of the year. Existing structures at stream crossings will be evaluated for replacement with pipes, box culverts or bridges as dictated by economic and environmental considerations. It is expected that construction activities may be required in or around flowing water at the major drainage crossings. As a result, short term construction related water quality impacts will occur but these should be minor in nature. The potential for erosion will be minimized by revegetating and mulching the exposed slopes as soon as practical following construction. A Section 3 (a) authorization allowing a temporary increase in water turbidity will be required in accordance with the provision of ARM 16-20.633(3). Standard design and construction procedures will be followed to assure that the impacts are minimal.

It is expected that minor channel modifications will be required for inlet and outlet channels, culvert excavation, placement of bedding material, riprap and alignment of new drainage facilities. Additionally, the proposed action will include relocating approximately 300 feet of Beaver Creek near milepost 35.1 in order to allow for construction of the new facility between the Roadhouse Ditch to the north and the steep terrain to the south. With proper scheduling of construction work, it is probable that pipes can be used for all detour crossings (if required) and it is anticipated that minor channel modifications will be required for the construction and removal of these detour facilities. These channel modifications should be minor in scope and have limited impacts on the streams. No point-source discharges are planned for this project.

Permits pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act will be obtained where required. The proposed Butcher Creek (MP.39.6), Beaver Creek (MP. 34.9), Whitebird Creek (MP.39.6), Joe Hill Creek (MP.42.0), and Shane Creek (MP.43.5) crossings all lie below the Corps of Engineers defined headwater locations, therefore, 404 permits will be required for placement of rip-rap or fill material below ordinary highway elevations at these sites. All remaining drainage crossings on this project lie above the headwaters, therefore, proposed construction activities will be covered by the Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit provided permit conditions are met. Also, a Floodplain Management Permit will be obtained from Stillwater County prior to any construction activities in floodplain areas.

FLOOD HAZARD IMPACTS

Impacts to floodplains resulting from the proposed project will be minor. The proposed alignment will encroach into the East Rosebud Creek floodplain. This impact is unavoidable in order to minimize the impacts to the Agency Ditch, a historic site and existing residential dwellings. Alternate B encroaches slightly into the 500-year flood boundary of the Stillwater River. Floodplain encroachment sites are shown on Figures 14 and 15.

The remaining floodplain encroachments are transverse crossings and cannot be avoided. Some channel modifications may be necessary at the crossings for hydraulic purposes and to facilitate construction. Standard design and construction procedures will be followed to assure that the impacts are minimal.

Since the proposed project must cross a designated floodplain, the proposed action is subject to the provisions of Executive

Order 11988. This Order requires Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent practicable, the long and short term adverse impact associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplain and to avoid direct and indirect support floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative. The proposed project will not support additional future floodplain development.

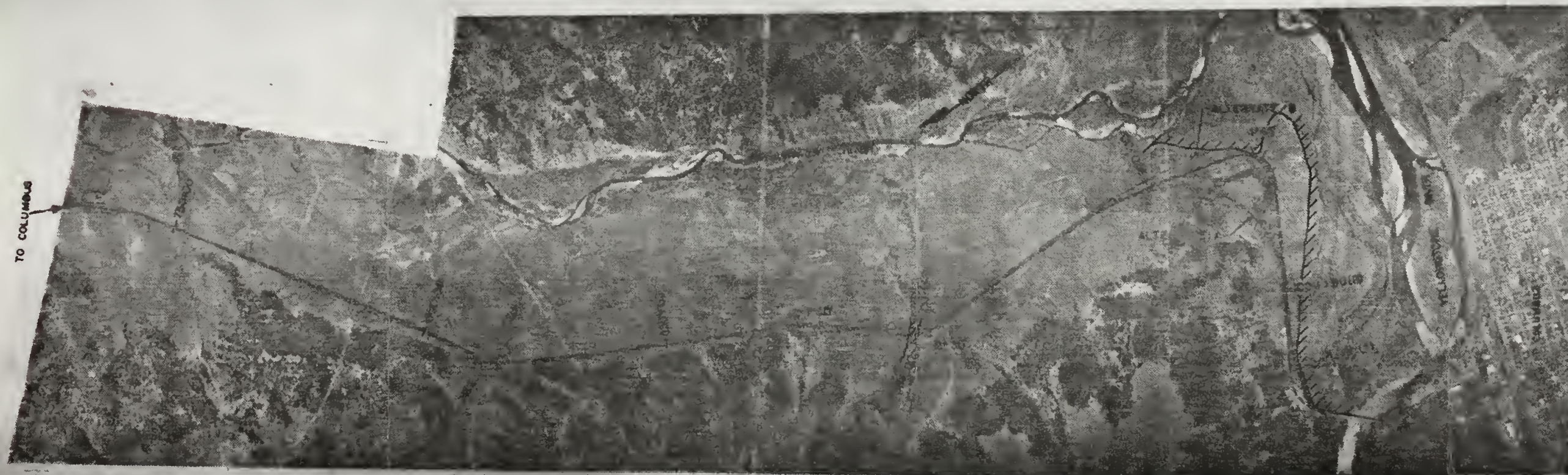
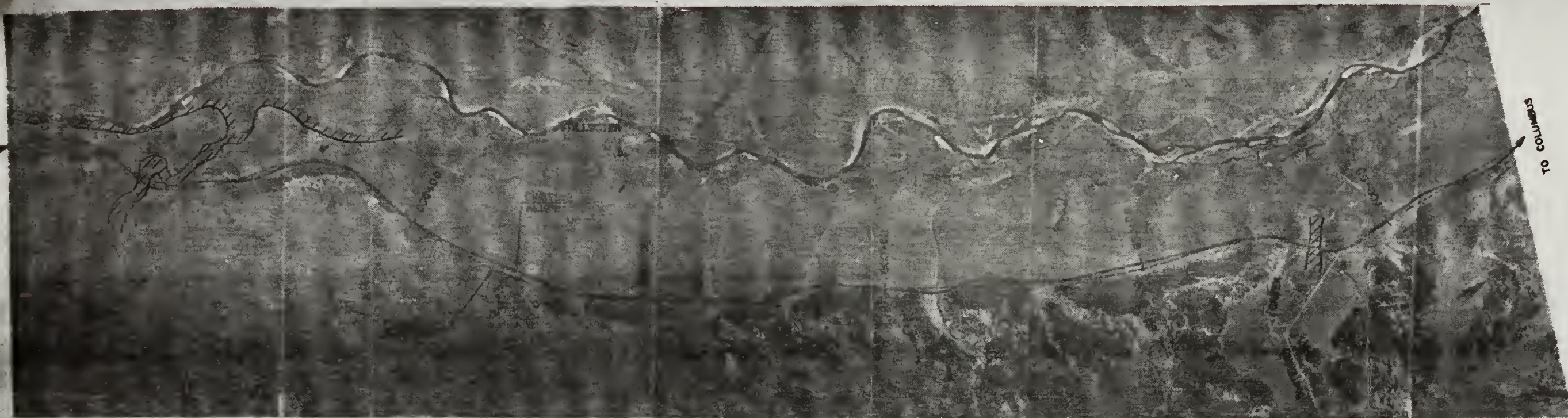
The "no-build" alternative would avoid any floodplain impacts. However, the "no-build" alternative is not considered to be practical in that it does not satisfy the objectives or need for the proposed action. As indicated above, Alternative A and Alternative B will have minor floodplain impacts. With the above described measures to avoid stream encroachments, either alternative will avoid floodplain impacts to the extent practicable.

IRRIGATION FACILITIES IMPACTS

There are extensive minor and major irrigation facilities located within the limits of this project that will be impacted as a result of proposed reconstruction. Plans call for irrigation system relocation/modification to be accomplished during the non-irrigation season or for temporary facilities to be provided. In either case, irrigation system relocation/modification will be coordinated with and have prior approval of the irrigation facility owners.

WETLANDS IMPACTS

Executive Order 11990, "Protection of Wetlands", established a national policy to avoid, to the extent possible, the long and short term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative. The "no-build" alternative is not considered to be practical.

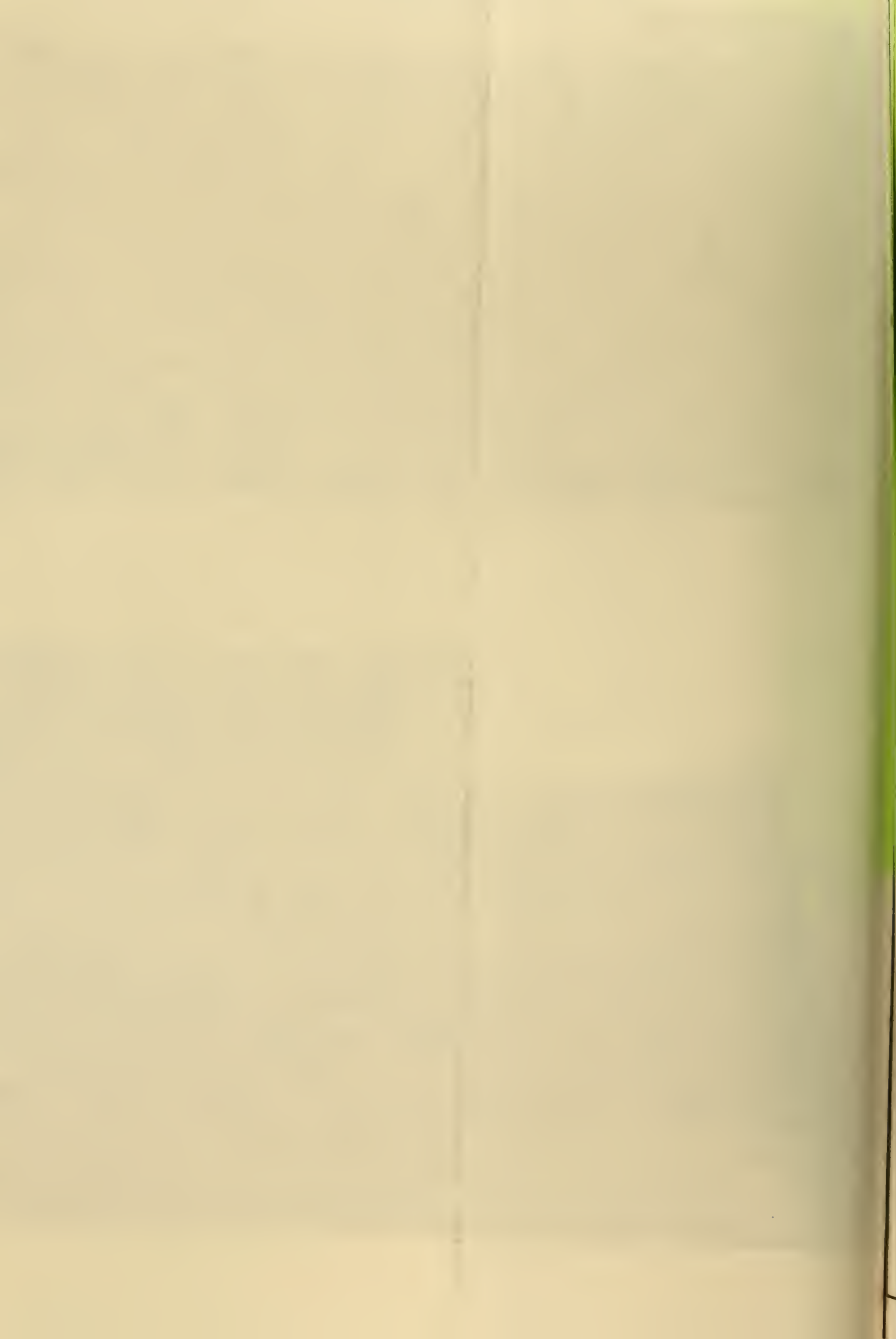


FLOODPLAIN BOUNDARY



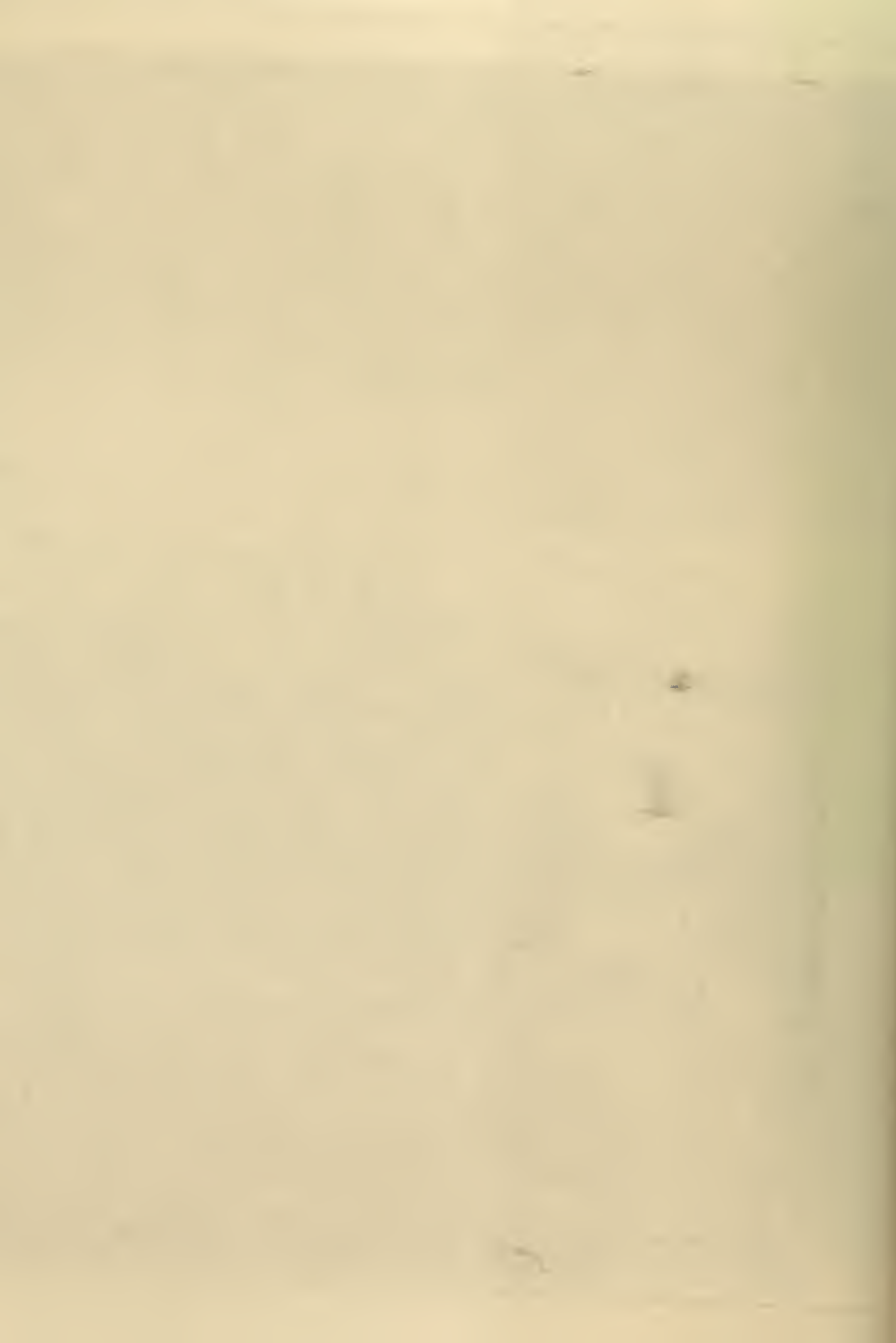
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F 78-2(5) 27
 ABSAROKEE to
 COLUMBUS
 FIGURE 15TH
 FLOODPLAIN
 ENCROACHMENT
 SITES





F 78-2(5) 27
 ABSAROOKEE to
 COLUMBUS
 FIGURE 14
 FLOODPLAIN
 ENCROACHMENT
 SITES



There are four general areas in which a disturbance of wetland sites would have a negative impact on local wildlife populations - primarily songbirds. They are (1) the large cattail marsh complex just south of the Yellowstone River bridge - sites 22 and 24; (2) the cattail marsh stand south of Absarokee - site 8; (3) the East Rosebud Creek streambottom - sites 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10; and (4) the area in and around sites 19, 20 and 21. The disturbance (or even removal) of the remaining sites - 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 23 - would not have a tangible impact on wildlife populations in the immediate vicinity.

Of greatest importance would be the two cattail stands at sites 22 and 24. Plans for reconstruction in this area call for flattening the curve as the roadway leaves the Yellowstone River bridge and turns to the northwest. The existing horizontal curve is far below the minimum standard for this type of facility. The proposed construction would not substantially change the present alignment however, the flatter curve would require placing fill into the wetland at site 22. Approximately 0.24 acres of wetland at this site would be lost due to the proposed construction. Also in this area reconstruction of the intersection with FAS 421 is proposed. This action, while having an adverse impact on site 23, would at the same time have a positive impact on site 24. The total adverse impact to wetlands at sites 22, 23, and 24 is 0.33 acres. This small amount of fill into the wetlands, is the minimum amount possible while at the same time accomplishing the goals of upgrading the roadway and intersection from their present substandard conditions. Culvert placement and construction methods will be specified to minimize the impact on the wetland and maintain the existing drainage patterns and open surface water.

The proposed realignment calls for flattening the curve of the roadway and shifting the alignment slightly through portions of the marsh/cottonwood complex at site 8. Presently cattails exist in an old oxbow of Rosebud Creek and along the east edge of the roadway. The proximity of Rosebud Creek and an irrigation ditch to the west combined with extremely steep topography to the east serve to limit options for locating an alternate to that proposed. The existence of wetland vegetation is likely dependent on the existing highway acting as a dam. Culvert placement will be specified in order to maintain present drainage patterns and the integrity of the hydrologic character in the immediate area to the extent practicable. Approximately 1.08 acres of wetland will be lost at Site 8 due to the proposed construction. Since the purpose of this action is to increase the safety and upgrade the standards of the facility, avoidance is not a practical alternative.

The areas in the vicinity of streambottom sites 1 through 6 lie within the proposed reconstruction corridor. Through this section, the new highway would run essentially parallel to, and just west of the existing highway. The proposed alignment in this area has been chosen to minimize the impact on the Agency Ditch, a historic site that is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Removal of vegetation within this corridor would have a minimal effect on local wildlife populations, as ample habitat of similar structure and function exists in the general area. The remaining streambottom sites occur in the vicinity, but will not be removed by the new alignment. Approximately 8.08 acres of wetland will be removed from these sites as a result of the proposed action.

The final area of adverse impact on wetlands is in the vicinity of sites, 19, 20 and 21. This area is relatively undisturbed and possesses high food and cover values for most wildlife species. Wetland vegetation is limited to the very fringe of the White Ditch. However, a well-developed canopy of mesic shrubs extends for several meters on either side of the creek, offering habitat conditions unique to the immediate area. The ponderosa pine-chokecherry hillside toward the northern end of the bluff likely serves as security habitat for the resident deer population.

The two alternate alignments proposed for flattening the sharp curve in the existing highway will each have somewhat of a different impact on the wetland area.

Alternate B would require a crossing of the White Ditch but would have a minimal impact on the wildlife habitat at the north end of this area. Approximately 0.04 acres of wetlands would be removed for alternate B. Alternate A, while requiring relocation of a portion of the White Ditch, would have a substantial impact on the wildlife habitat and would remove approximately 0.48 acres of wetlands.

The total amount of wetlands lost due to the proposed action is 12.02 acres for Alternate A and 11.55 acres for Alternate B as shown on Table 4. Table 4 also shows if wetlands are isolated or adjacent and indicates if the wetlands are located in the 100-year floodplain. Wetlands mitigation will be in accordance with "Interagency Memorandum of Understanding: Management and Mitigation of Highway Construction Impacts to Wetlands in the State of Montana." Additional right-of-way will be acquired and the wetlands lost will be replaced. Based upon the above considerations, it is determined that there is no practicable alternative to the proposed new construction in wetlands and that the proposed new action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use.

TABLE 4

A SUMMARY OF AFFECTED WETLANDS BY TYPE, EFFECTED AREA, AND SITE LOCATION
FOR THE
ABSAROKEE-COLUMBUS WETLAND EVALUATION PROJECT

Location (Station)	Isolated/ Adjacent	Site Number	In 100 YR. Floodplain	Vegetation Type	Site Area Acreage	Affected Area (Acres)	
						Alternate A	Alternate B
97+00%	A	1	N	II-A	0.95	0.56	0.56
99+00%	A	2*	Y	DF/II-C	7.19**	1.84	1.84
124+70%	A	3	Y	II-B	0.39	0.09	0.09
135+25%	A	4	Y	II-A	2.24	1.97	1.97
129+10%	A	5*	Y	DF/A,B,C	11.71**	3.29	3.29
147+60%	A	6	Y	I-A, II-A	0.58	0.34	0.34
192+50%	A	7*	Y	III-A/III-B	1.40**	0.11	0.11
218+70%	A	8	N	I-D	1.53	1.08	1.08
225+00%	A	9	Y	III-B	0.65	-0-	-0-
227+55%	A	10*	Y	DF/II-A,B,C	8.97**	-0-	-0-
353+20%	I	11	N	II-A	0.08	0.07	0.07
442+40%	A	12*	Y	III-B	1.09**	0.11	0.11
450+00%	A	13*	Y	III-C	3.54**	0.73	0.73
562+70%	A	14*	N	III-A	0.71**	0.09	0.09
609+00%	A	15*	N	III-C	0.82**	0.17	0.17
684+25%	A	16*	Y	III-A	0.69**	0.13	0.13
815+60%	A	17*	N	III-A	0.75**	0.08	0.08
897+00%	A	18*	Y	DF/III-A	2.19	0.48	0.52
955+75%	A	19*#	N	III-B	2.35#**	0.48	0.04
959+00%	A	20 #	N	III-B	---##	-0-	-0-
964+00%	A	21 #	N	III-B	---##	-0-	-0-
1010+00%	A	22*	Y	I-D	1.58**	0.31	0.24
1010+00%	I	23	N	I-D	0.09	0.09	0.09
1010+00%	A	24*	Y	I-D	1.46**	-0-	-0-

Total Affected Acreage..... 12.02 acres 11.55 acres

* Site extends beyond mapped area.

** Acreage of site within mapped area.

Sites 19, 20 and 21 are within the same polygon.

Acreage of polygon containing sites 19, 20 and 21.

2/22/89

FISH AND WILDLIFE IMPACTS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been consulted regarding the presence of threatened or endangered species in the project area. The USFWS has determined that bald eagles and peregrine falcons are the only two threatened or endangered species that utilize the project area.

No resident bald eagles are known in the area, although a few are known to winter at times along portions of the Stillwater and Yellowstone rivers. The peregrine falcon is likely to occur as a transient only. No potential breeding habitat was noted in the immediate project vicinity.

One source of impact to bald eagles and peregrine falcons is the electrocution hazard resulting from relocated overhead power lines. Alternatives A and B would require essentially the same amount of power line relocation.

In areas where the safety of raptors is determined to be a major concern, the company controlling the power line shall be required to raptor proof any power line that is to be moved as a result of the project. The power lines of concern are those that carry between 12,000 and 69,000 volts and have a separation of conductors of less than 60 inches. Upon request, the MDOH Environmental Unit shall provide the necessary information and instruction for raptor proofing the power lines.

Winter observations in the area have indicated that at least part of the winter food supply for bald eagles comes not from the customary aquatic source, but from carrion (deer kills). Eagles feeding on kills by the road may be hit by cars; therefore, effort should be made to remove road-killed deer as quickly as possible.

The biological assessment (ECON, Inc., 1988) concludes that this project will not adversely affect the bald eagle or the peregrine falcon. Precautions shall be taken to minimize any adverse effect that may occur. These precautions shall include encouraging utility companies to raptor proof any overhead electrical lines relocated as a result of the project, removing road-killed deer as quickly as possible, and revegetating roadsides with plant species which are not palatable to big game species.

Impacts on big game consist primarily of collisions with road vehicles. Deer populations in the area are high. The road is generally located between two habitat types (foothills for cover and valley floor for food) which increases the chances for deer/vehicles collisions. Mule deer tend to move from the foothills into the haylands to feed during the summer and fall months, while white-tailed deer may move out of the valleys into the foothills during early spring to feed on emerging forbs.

In order to minimize the amount of time spent by deer directly adjacent to the highway, the roadside will be reseeded with less palatable plant species such as smooth brome and shrubby cinquefoil.

Improved safety characteristics resulting from the reconstruction (including increased sight distances, fill slope flattening, and widening the clear zone along the highway) will inherently reduce any potential impacts on big game and eagles.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MDFWP) has identified concerns for the passage of fish through the drainage structures across Beaver Creek, Mexican Joe Creek, Whitebird Creek, Joe Hill Creek, and Shane Creek. Any new drainage structures at these crossings will be designed to

provide free fish passage. Therefore, the project will have no significant impact to fish populations in the project area.

The majority of the project involves reconstruction of the highway along the existing highway corridor. Utilizing the existing highway corridor will minimize the impact on habitat and therefore minimize the adverse impact on wildlife. Near Columbus where alternative alignments A and B are being considered, Alternative B would have the least impact on wildlife habitat.

The "no-build" alternative would not impact any wildlife habitat. However, even with this alternative, the existing narrow curvilinear alignment increases the risk of deer-vehicle collisions as sight distance is restricted on this alignment. As traffic volumes increase, the number of deer-vehicle collisions will increase even with this alternative.

UTILITIES IMPACTS

This reconstruction project will involve extensive relocation of utilities in the area. Buried telephone cables along the existing highway will be impacted for essentially the entire length of the project. Overhead electric transmission, distribution and service lines will also be impacted in many areas as well as buried electric service lines in several locations.

Natural gas transmission, distribution and service lines are also in the project area. In general these natural gas facilities are located west of the existing highway, therefore, the alignment chosen to minimize the impact to Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance will also minimize impacts on natural gas facilities.

Alternatives A and B will impact the buried telephone cable to the same extent, either through construction of the new highway or obliteration of the existing facility. Alternative A will have the greatest impact on the natural gas distribution system conflicting with a transmission line for several thousand feet as well as a service line. Alternative A also impacts a residential water well and associated water supply line.

Alternative B also conflicts with a natural gas transmission line and service lines although to a lesser extent. Alternatives A and B also have approximately the same impact on electric distribution and service lines.

Cable TV, water and sanitary sewer service are available to the residents of Absarokee. The cable TV lines are located overhead eliminating any conflict. An overlay of the existing road surface is planned through Absarokee requiring the adjustment of manholes and valve covers. Milling of the existing pavement surface will be used as required prior to the overlay in Absarokee in order to maintain existing surface drainage patterns.

All utility relocations will be handled in accordance with Montana Department of Highways standard utility relocation policies. The no-build alternative would not have any impacts on existing utility services.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

Construction related activities will result in some short term adverse impacts which cannot be avoided. However, these impacts will be temporary in nature and should only last for the duration of construction activities. Construction related impacts will include:

- emissions from asphalt plants and crushers,
- dust from construction equipment activities,
- increased noise levels from construction equipment,
- potential for erosion from fresh cut and fill slopes,
- increase in water turbidity in streams from construction activities in these areas, and
- inconvenience to highway users resulting from delays, detours, and temporary surfacing.

These adverse impacts will be minimized to the extent practicable through proper construction practices. Air quality permits from the State Air Quality Bureau will be required for asphalt plants and crushers. Dust will be controlled by watering or other acceptable methods. Construction related erosion will be controlled and slopes will be revegetated as soon as practical. A traffic control plan will be developed to minimize inconvenience to motorists during construction. Alternative A would result in slightly less inconvenience and delay to motorists during construction as the existing roadway in this location would remain substantially undisturbed during construction activities.

The project will generally be designed so that cut and fill quantities balance. However, design considerations may require borrow or waste excavation in some areas. Additionally, gravel sources for base and surfacing aggregates have not yet been defined. Borrow material removal and gravel pits will be subject to applicable rules and regulations of the Montana Open Cut Mining Act, necessitating a mine reclamation plan to be filed with the State.

VI. COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

Coordination efforts were initiated by the Montana Department of Highways on December 30, 1985 when a letter of intent was issued by the Department to federal, state, and local agencies and affected private organizations. Comments and information were requested which would be relevant to this project. Copies of pertinent correspondence are included on the following pages.

Coordination has taken place with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to minimize impacts to historic and cultural sites. Coordination will continue and the required clearance will be obtained in accordance with Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act. Every effort will be made to obtain Section 4(f) approval.

On January 9, 1989 a school board meeting was held in Absarokee. Representatives of the consulting firm responsible for design of the project and a representative of the Montana Department of Highways attended the meeting in an effort to keep the school board informed concerning the status of the preliminary design and the associated impacts on the new school site.

On March 23, 1989, a public information meeting was held at the Absarokee High School. The purpose of this meeting was to present the project to interested persons and local agencies and to solicit input on the project. The majority of those in attendance indicated a preference for Alternate B, which is the preferred alternate.

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS



TEDESCHWINOEN GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

2701 PROSPECT

HELENA MONTANA 59620

December 30, 1985

Re: F 78-2(5)27
Absarokee - Columbus

Gentlemen:

This letter is to inform you of the intentions of the Montana Department of Highways to develop a Federal Aid Highway project on Montana Highway 78 (FAP 78). The proposed project will consist of reconstruction of the existing road starting at the junction of FAP 78 with a county road approximately 5.2 miles south of Absarokee. The project will extend north through Absarokee to the intersection with State Secondary Route 421 just south of Columbus. Total length of this project is approximately 18.6 miles (see attached map).

The project will upgrade the road to more modern standards by improving the vertical and horizontal alignments. The existing right-of-way will be used as much as possible, however a considerable amount of right-of-way will be required. The intersection of this project and State Secondary 421 will be improved.

No firm letting date has been established. The letting date will depend on problems encountered during design, the availability of funding, and the acquisition of new right-of-way. Past experience has shown that projects of this nature take at least six to seven years to develop. This 18.6 miles of road will probably be let to contract as two or more separate contracts.

In addition to informing you of our intentions to develop this project, we would also like to request from you any assistance you can give us relative to information pertinent to this project. Any information regarding problems this project could cause or eliminate, environmental matters, views or opinions for or against the project, or any other matter that you feel might be appropriate will certainly be appreciated. Also, if you know of

December 30, 1985
Page 2

anything existing or planned that could be affected by this project, we will appreciate your informing us of it.

The attached list indicates those agencies to which this letter is being sent. If you are aware of other agencies or groups that might be affected or concerned and are not on the list, please let us know and we will contact them.

Sincerely,

Stephen C. Kologi
Stephen C. Kologi, P.E., Chief
Preconstruction Bureau

RECEIVED

JAN 10 1986

MONTANA DEPT. OF HIGHWAYS
BILLINGS, MONTANA

32:SCK:PFJ:mb:lg

Attachments

cc: D. M. Harriott
S. C. Kologi
D. L. Meiers
R. E. Champion
N. H. Rognlie
R. E. Wegner
J. R. Ricker
G. A. Jackson
D. P. Bartsch
K. F. Skoog
D. J. Unsworth

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F 78-2(15)
Absarokee - Columbus
Stillwater County
December 12, 1985

Honorable Robert C. Kem
P.O. Box 575
Columbus, MT 59019

Columbus Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 783
Columbus, MT 59019

Elem. & H.S. Dist. No. 6
P.O. Box 899
Columbus, MT 59019

Elem. & H.S. Dist. 52C-52
P.O. Box 407
Absarokee, MT 59001

U.S. Postmaster
Columbus, MT 59019

U.S. Postmaster
Absarokee, MT 59001

Montana Power Company
40 E. Broadway
Butte, MT 59701

Beartooth Electric Co-op, Inc.
931 E. 3rd Ave. S.
Columbus, MT 59019

Department of Anthropology
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59801

Department of Commerce
Aeronautics Division
Airport Road
Helena, MT 59620

Department of Commerce
ATTN: Admin. Trans. Div.
1424 - 9th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Stillwater County Planning Board
P.O. Box 851
Columbus, MT 59019

Stillwater County Commissioners
P.O. Box 147
Columbus, MT 59019

Stillwater Co. Ext. Office
P.O. Box 607
Columbus, MT 59019

Columbus Field Office
P.O. Box 415
Columbus, MT 59019

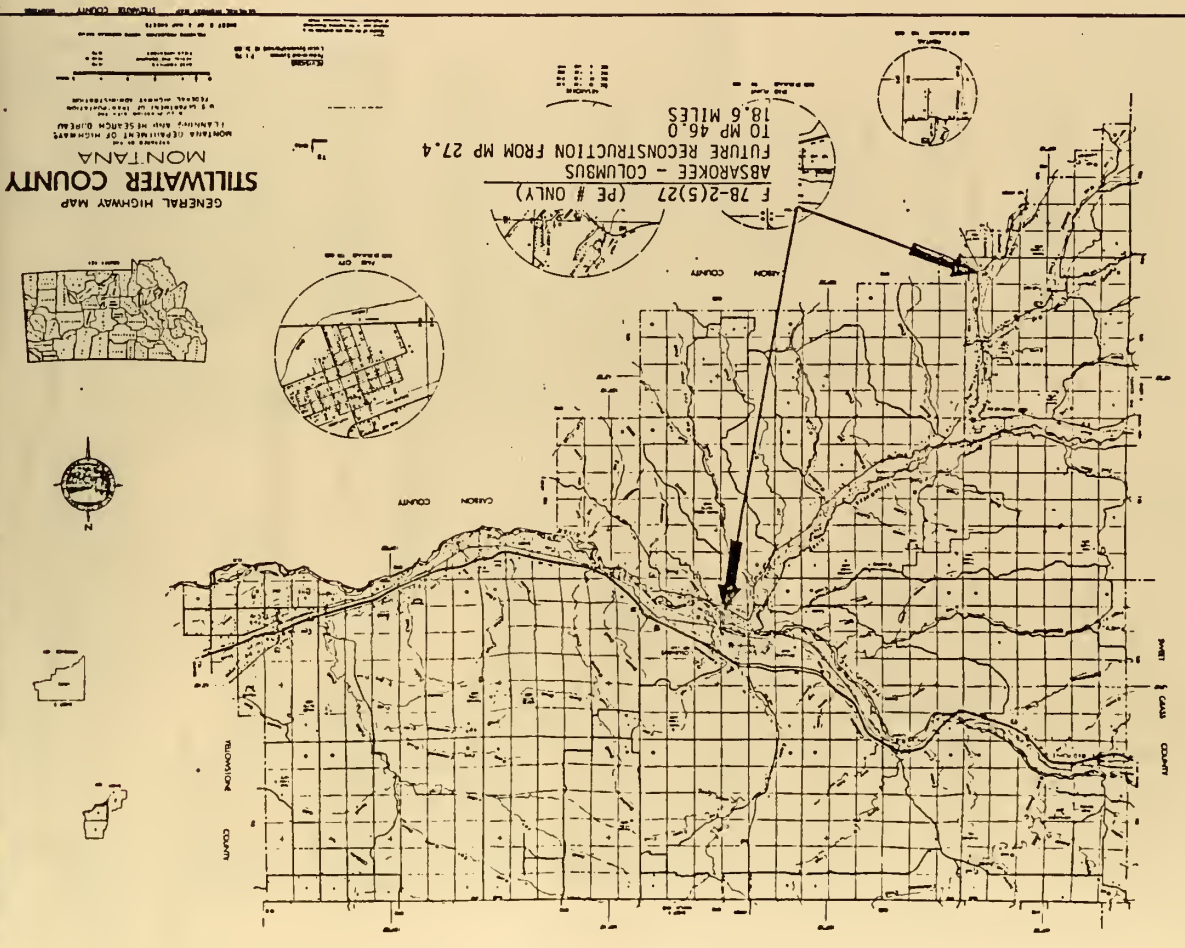
State Soil Conservation Service
10 E. Babcock Street, Room 443
Bozeman, MT 59715

Mountain Bell
Attn: Staff Supervisor
P.O. Box
Helena, MT 59601

Department of Health
& Environmental Sciences
Air Quality Bureau
Water Quality Bureau
Cogswell Building
Helena, MT 59620

Department of Natural Resources
& Conservation
Office of the Director
1520 East 6th
Helena, MT 59620

Department of State Lands
Office of the Commissioner
1625 - 11th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620



Department of Fish,
Wildlife & Parks
Project & Planning Bureau
Parks Division
Stream Protection Act Manager
Fisheries Division
1420 E. 6th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620

Montana Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Officer
225 North Roberts Street
Helena, MT 59620

Department of the Army
Omaha Dist. Corps of Eng, ATT. MROOP-N
6014 U.S. Post Office & Courthouse
215 N. 17th St.
Omaha, NE 68102

U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service, Region 1
ATTN: Regional Forester
P. O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59801

Environmental Protection Agency
Deputy Regional Administrator
One Denver Place, Suite 1300
999 Eighteenth Street
Denver, CO 80202-2413

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Region VIII
Denver Federal Center
Building 710
Denver, CO 80225

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Federal Office Building
P. O. Box 2553
Billings, MT 59103

Environmental Quality Council
Office of the Director
Capitol Post Office
P. O. Box 215
Helena, MT 59620

Department of Health & Human Services
Director, Office of Environmental Affairs
200 Independence Ave. S.W., Room 537F
Washington, D.C. 20201

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
222 N. 3rd
P. O. Box 36800
Billings, MT 59017

U.S. Department of the Interior
Director, Office of the Interior
Project Review (Bruce Blanchard)
Washington, DC 20242

U.S. Department of the Interior
Western Technical Center
Office of Surface Mining
Brooks Towers, 1020 - 15th Street
Denver, CO 80202

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
Airport District Office
FAA Building, Room 2
Helena, MT 59601

Montana State University
Institute of Applied Research
Bozeman, MT 59715

State Clearinghouse
Lieutenant Governor's Office
Capitol Office Building
Helena, MT 59620

Montana State University
Dr. Les Davis
Department of Anthropology
Bozeman, MT 59715

Federal Housing Administration
Office of the Director
Housing and Urban Development
Federal Office Building
301 South Park, Drawer 10095
Helena, MT 59626

Department of Health & Human Services
Director, Office of Environmental Affairs
200 Independence Ave. S.W., Room 537F
Washington, D.C. 20201

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
222 N. 3rd
P. O. Box 36800
Billings, MT 59017

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Director, Office of the Interior
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Western Technical Center
Office of Surface Mining
Brooks Towers, 1020 - 15th Street
Denver, CO 80202

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
Airport District Office
FAA Building, Room 2
Helena, MT 59601

U.S. Department of the Interior
Chief, Environmental Impact
Assessment Program
U.S. Geological Survey, MS-760
Reston, VA 22092

U.S. Department of the Interior
Chief, Western Field
Operation Center
Bureau of Mines
E. 360 3rd Ave.
Spokane, WA 99202

U.S. Department of the Interior
A. R. Morrell, Environmental Mgr.
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621 - SJ
Portland, OR 97208

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Branch of Compliance, RMR0-PC
Denver Federal Center
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225

U.S. Department of the Interior
Regional Environmental Officer
Missouri River Basin
Denver Federal Center
Room 688, Building 67
Denver, CO 80225

American Wilderness Alliance
C. R. Merritt, Executive Director
7600 E. Arapahoe Rd., Suite 114
Englewood, CO 80112

Burlington Northern Railroad, Inc.
Don M. Nettleton, Director
Rocky Mountain District
Timber and Land Management
700 South Avenue West
Missoula, MT 59801

Montana Automobile Association
P. O. Box 4129
Helena, MT 59604

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
301 South Park, Drawer 10056
Helena, MT 59626

U.S. Department of Transportation
United State Coast Guard
Commander (OAH)
13th Coast Guard District
915 Second Avenue
Seattle, WA 98174

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Endangered Species Field Office
Federal Building, 301 So. Park
Helena, MT 59626

U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Geological Survey
Water Resources Division
Room 428, Federal Building
301 S. Park, Drawer 10076
Helena, MT 59626

Mr. Richard P. Graetz
P.O. Box 5630
Helena, MT 59604

Sierra Club
Billings-Yellowstone Basin Group
c/o Sally Hammond
2935 Rimview Road
Billings, MT 59102

The Wilderness Society
Attention: Bill Cunningham
P. O. Box 1184
Helena, MT 59624

Montana Wildlife Federation
P. O. Box 3526
Bozeman, MT 59715

Montana Motor Carriers Association
P. O. Box 1714
Helena, MT 59624

Montana Stockgrowers Association
Office of the Secretary
P. O. Box 1679
Helena, MT 59624



State of Montana
Office of The Lieutenant Governor
Helena 59620
(406)444-3111

GEORGE TURMAN
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

January 7, 1986

RECEIVED

Mr. Stephen C. Kologe, Chief
Pavement Construction Bureau
MT Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

MONTANA DEPT. OF HIGHWAYS
BILLINGS, MONTANA

RE: Notification of Intent to Develop Federal Aid Project on Montana Highway 78 (FAP 78) 5.2 Miles South of Absarokee, MT to South of Columbus, MT - F 78-2(5)27
Montana State IGR Clearinghouse SAI No. MT860107-332-S

Dear Mr. Kologe:

The above-captioned notification of intent has been received in the Clearinghouse. In order to provide notification to parties that may be interested in the proposal, it will be listed in the next Intergovernmental Review Bulletin issued from this office.

Any inquiries or comments regarding the proposal will be directed to your office. We will request that comments be submitted to your office by February 7, 1986, and that copies be sent to the Clearinghouse for our files.

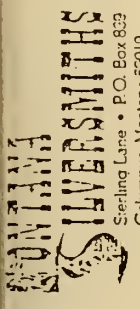
The Clearinghouse intends to take no further action on this notification of intent.

Sincerely,

Sue Heath

SUE HEATH
Clearinghouse Manager

ACT.	BILLINGS DISTRICT
	District Engineer
	Survey Const.
	Field Project Mgrs.
	Eng. Officer
	Chief Field Maint. (H. U.)
	Maint. Supv's.
	Shop Supv.
	Chief of Surveying
	Chief of Const.
	Chief of Maint. Supv.
	Centralized Offices Supv.
	Payroll
	FILE



SILVERSMITHS
Sterling Lane • P.O. Box 839
Columbus, Montana 59019

Montana Highway Department
424 Morey
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Sirs:

I understand that the Montana Highway Department will be moving forward on improving Highway 307 between Columbus and Absarokee in the foreseeable future.

I own land on both sides of the highway approximately 4 1/2 miles out of Columbus, at Joe Hill Creek, where it crosses onto the highway.

The reason for my letter is to inform the department that we are very happy to cooperate with the highway department in any way possible to improve the traffic situation at Joe Hill Road and Joe Hill Creek Bridge so that it is not such a hazard to traffic.

It's quite a complex area with various irrigation ditches, utilities, the creek, and intersection with the Joe Hill County road.

Since I own land on both sides of the road I would be very happy to provide the state with the necessary land for a new bridge and a relocation of the road slightly to the northwest of where it is now. My neighbor to the north, Mr. Lee Adsit, would I'm sure, also be willing to provide an improved corner and access to the new bridge with a slight change to the corner of one of his fields.

If anyone would like to visit with me about this matter, I would appreciate a call during office hours at 1-800-549-0592 here at Montana Silversmiths in Columbus. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

KEIT B. WILLIAMS
President

KDW:cms



Fine Quality Western Printing

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F 78-2(5)

June 7, 1989

Initial	Attach	MAIL ROUTE
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

AIR QUALITY BUREAU

TED SCHWINDEN, GOVERNOR



(406) 444-3454

STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-3454

January 10, 1985

Mr. Stephen Kologi, Chief
Preconstruction Bureau
Montana Department of Highways
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59620

FILE: F 78-2(5)27

This is a response to your letter of notification regarding the highway improvement project designated as F78-2(5)27 Absarokee to Columbus.

In general, any project which will smooth out the traffic flow, and reduce stopping and idling time will also reduce the amount of air pollution emissions from transportation sources. From this standpoint the Air Quality Bureau would like to support your efforts to upgrade the Montana highway system. Asphalt plants and gravel crushers are the primary emission sources for highway construction, and they must obtain an air quality permit from our office to operate in the state.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Warren Norton
Environmental Specialist

WN:si

RECEIVED

**MONTANA DEPT. OF HIGHWAYS
BILLINGS, MONTANA**

Date Recd.	Precinct	School District
10-11-78	PRECINCT 1	SCHOOL DISTRICT 1
11-11-78	PRECINCT 2	SCHOOL DISTRICT 2
12-11-78	PRECINCT 3	SCHOOL DISTRICT 3
1-11-79	PRECINCT 4	SCHOOL DISTRICT 4
2-11-79	PRECINCT 5	SCHOOL DISTRICT 5
3-11-79	PRECINCT 6	SCHOOL DISTRICT 6
4-11-79	PRECINCT 7	SCHOOL DISTRICT 7
5-11-79	PRECINCT 8	SCHOOL DISTRICT 8
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8-11-79	PRECINCT 11	SCHOOL DISTRICT 11
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[illegible]

Montana Department

of

Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Helena, Montana 59620
January 13, 1986

Mr. Stephen C. Kologi, P.E., Chief
Preconstruction Bureau
Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Kologi:

RE: F 78-2(5)27
Absarokee - Columbus

We have reviewed your proposed development plans for the above project. The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has four fishing access sites on the Stillwater River which runs adjacent to the highway which you plan to improve. These sites are: Itch-Ke-pe FAS; Fireman's Point FAS; Swinging Bridge FAS; and White Bird FAS.

Each of these has federal dollars through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program in the form of development and/or acquisition. Any encroachment on these sites as a result of your proposed development would result in a 6(f) Conversion of Use.

Please let us know the status of these sites in relation to your proposed project area. If you need more information from us, please call me at 444-3750. I appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Olden
GRETCHEN OLSENER, Chief
Project and Planning Bureau
Parks Division

SD/1j

Info	Attach	Initial
30 Exp. Specialties		
31 Contract Plans		
32 Loc. Road Design		
33 Environment		
34 Hydrology		
35 Surfacing Design		
36 Traffic		
37 Pub. Hearing		
38 Photogrammetry		
39 Consultant Design		

Mr. Stephen C. Kologi, PE
Chief, Preconstruction Bureau
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect
Helena, MT 59501

Dear Mr. Kologi:

We appreciate your December 30, 1985 letter informing us of your intentions to improve Montana Highway No. 78 (FHP78).

We have forwarded a copy of your letter to Mr. Dave Filius, Forest Supervisor of the Custer National Forest. The Forest will be interacting with you as needed during the planning for this project and will be able to provide the information you have requested.

Please add the Forest Supervisor, Custer National Forest to your mailing list. The complete address is as follows:

Forest Supervisor
Custer National Forest
P.O. Box 2556
Billings, MT 59103

Sincerely,

Beryl Johnston
BERYL JOHNSTON
Director of Engineering

cc: Custer NF w/copy of letter from Mr. Kologi

ACT	FILE
Billings District	
District Engineer	
Supv. Con. L.	
Field Project Mgrs.	
Engr. Officer	
Chief Field Maint. (H) (L)	
Ins. Int. Supv's.	
Shop Supv.	
Engineering Services Supv.	
Maintenance Supv.	
Right-of-Way Supv.	
Construction Services Supv.	
Personnel Supv.	
Payroll	



United States
Department of
Agriculture

R-1

Reply to 7720
Ref: F 78-2(5)27
JAN 14 1986

RECEIVED

JAN 17 1986

MONTANA DEPT. OF HIGHWAYS
BILLINGS, MONTANA

Info	Attach	Initial
30 Exp. Specialties		
31 Contract Plans		
32 Loc. Road Design		
33 Environment		
34 Hydrology		
35 Surfacing Design		
36 Traffic		
37 Pub. Hearing		
38 Photogrammetry		
39 Consultant Design		

FS 5270-110 (7-81)



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Endangered Species, Field Office
Federal Bldg., U.S. Courthouse
301 South Park
P.O. Box 10023
Helena, Montana 59626

IN REPLY REFER TO:

A-17(1)

Mr. Stephen C. Kelogi, P.E.
Chief Preconstruction Bureau
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Kelogi:

We have received your letters of intent for Brassey Street and Casino Creek Drive (M 7199) and Absarokee-Columbus (F 78-2(5)27), and the Draft 4(f) Evaluation for Avon-Elliston (RF 8-1(4)11).

We have discussed the projects with our Ecological Services personnel in Billings, and are sending copies of your letters to them. They will contact you directly regarding concerns they may have.

We have reviewed the three projects, and have the following comments regarding endangered species:

Brassey Street and Casino Creek Drive (M 7199). Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) may occasionally fly through the project area. Based upon the project location, we would not expect either of these raptors to be impacted.

Absarokee-Columbus (F 78-2(5)27). Bald eagles are winter residents and migrants along the Stillwater and Yellowstone Rivers. Peregrine falcons historically nested near Columbus. There have been no verified nesting attempts in recent years, but peregrines may occur in the project area as migrants, and may reoccupy the nest site in the future. If the project necessitates the relocation of powerlines, those lines should be raptor-proofed according to Olendorff et al (1981).

Avon-Elliston (RF 8-1(4)11). Bald eagles winter along the Little Blackfoot River, and there have been unverified rumors of nesting eagles within the project area. Both bald eagles and peregrine falcons may occur in the project area as migrants. If the project necessitates relocation of powerlines, those lines should be raptor-proofed according to Olendorff et al (1981).

Thank you for the opportunity to review these projects. We appreciate your efforts to conserve endangered species and wildlife habitat.

Sincerely,

Wayne G. Brewster

Wayne G. Brewster
Field Supervisor
Endangered Species

cc: ES Billings

Date Recd. Preconst. 11/10/16		MAIL ROUTE	Initial	Attach
Act	Info			
		30		
		30 Eng. Specialist		
		31 Contract Plans		
		32 Road Design		
		33 Environment		
		34 Hydraulic		
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Department of
AgricultureConservation
Service

P O Box 415
Columbus MT 59019

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2. Specialties

30	30 Eng. Specialist	
	31 Contract Plans	
	32 Loc. Road Design	✓
	33 Environment	
	34 Hydraulic	✓
	35 Earthing Design	16.
	36 Traffic	
	37 Pub. Hearing	
	38 Photogrammetry	
	39 Consultant Design	
	✓ <u>OTHERS</u>	
		✓

P O Box 415
Columbus MT 59019
F 78-2(5)27
COUNT DOWN
RE: APPROPRIATE
WATER RIGHTS
FURTHER

[illegible]

20		20 Eng. Specialist
21		21 Contract Plans
22	✓	22 Loc. Road Design
23		23 Environment
24	✓	24 Materials
25		25 Earthwork Design
26		26 Traffic
27		27 Pub. Hearing
28		28 Programming
29		29 Consultant Design
		✓ DIPLERS
	✓	

December 30, 1985,
Highway 78 (FAP78)
rents. the Stillwater

P O Box 415
Columbus WI 59019

F 78-225)ZT
COUNTY DNR
RE: APPROPRIATION
WATER RIGHTS
FILED ON.

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20	20 Eng. Socialism
21	21 Contract Plans
22	22 Loc. Road Design
23	23 Environment
24	24 Hydraulics
25	25 Building Design
26	26 Traffic
27	27 Pub. Hearing
28	28 Photogrammetry
29	29 Gradient Design

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December 30, 1985,
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P O Box 415
Columbus WI 59019

F 78'-2(5)ZT
CONTRACT 2022
RE: APPROPRIATE
WATER RIGHTS
FILED ON.

to respond to your letter regarding the construction project on the property. I have also reviewed your letter and included some of the information that the project requires. If possible, farmland preservation is a statewide importance. I have been attached with a letter enclosed, which gives you the route.

atches that probably contact them and inquire about the most complete list of the we have:

atch Co. - K

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30	30 Eng. Specialist	
	31 Contract Plans	
	32 Loc. Road Design	✓
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	34 Hydraulic	✓
	35 Earthing Design	16.
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	37 Pub. Hearing	
	38 Photogrammetry	
	39 Consultant Design	
	✓ <u>OTHERS</u>	
		✓

P O Box 415
Columbus MT 59019

*F 78-2(5)ZTC
COUNTY DNLC
RE: APPROPRIATE RIGHTS
WATER RIGHTS
FILED ON.*

I respond to your letter regarding the construction project on land owned by the State of Montana. I have also reviewed your letter and included some of the information requested. The project is located on the east side of the state, near the border with Idaho. It is a large-scale project and will require significant resources. I am enclosing a copy of the project description and a map showing the location of the project. I hope this information is helpful. If you have any further questions, please contact me at the address above.

Sincerely,
[Signature]

30	Eng. Specialist
31	Contract Plans
32	Loc. Road Design
33	Environment
34	Hydraulic
35	Earthwork Design
36	Traffic
37	Pub. Hearing
38	Photogrammetry
39	Consultant Design

✓ FILES

December 30, 1985,
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

2800

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Billings Resource Area 1
810 E. Main
Billings, MT 59105

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We support the project to upgrade FAP 78 and hope you will consider our comments. If we can be of any further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,
Stillwater City-County Planning Board

Bill M. Gault
Planning Board Chairman

Stillwater County,

Stephen Kologri
Preconstruction Bureau
Department of Highways
2701 Prospect
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Kologri:

Thank you for your letter of December 29, 1985 concerning the intentions of Montana Department of Highways to develop a Federal Aid Project on Montana Highway 78 (FAP 78).

We agree with the statements that a considerable amount of right-of-way will be required, the intersection of FAP 78 and State Secondary 421 should be improved, and that the road needs to be upgraded to more modern standards by improving the vertical and horizontal alignments.

In reference to the right-of-way needs we recommend that pasture land be used rather than irrigated land whenever possible. The right-of-way should be wide enough to allow for AASHTO Standard Shoulder widths, 6:1 slopes, flat borrow pits, and a bicycle/pedestrian lane if possible.

The intersection of FAP 78 and State Secondary 421 should be a T intersection if possible. Vertical and horizontal alignments are perhaps the most critical need. The curves need to be flattened, some guard rails, hills should be cut to allow a reasonable sight distances, and bridge structures should be to modern standards.

Irrigations ditches and approaches along FAP 78 are also a concern. The overflow of irrigation water onto the highway can cause hazards. The Roadhouse Ditch is a notable example. Some approaches onto the highway have poor sight distances, especially the Huntley Butte Road east of the Bridge across the Stillwater River in Sections 30 and 31, T3S, R19E. Traffic control during construction is also a concern due to the volume of traffic and the potential for mine construction traffic.

In addition, a special request was made to us during our Community Needs Assessment process by a group of citizens. The request was for a bicycle path from Absarokee to Columbus. We pass this request on to you for consideration of a bicycle/pedestrian lane or path in the pre-construction stage of the FAP 78 project.

Box 881
Phone (406) 322-4439
Columbus, Montana 59019

RECEIVED

FEB 4 1986

MONTANA DEPT. OF HIGHWAYS,
BILLINGS, MONTANA

Dick
Geary
CLIF

Date Recd	Project	Priority	Initials
1/15/86	MAIL/ROUTE	1	1
1/15/86	31 Contract Plans	1	1
1/15/86	32 Loc. Road Design	1	1
1/15/86	33 Environment	1	1
1/15/86	34 Hydraulic	1	1
1/15/86	35 Surfacing	1	1
1/15/86	36 Traffic	1	1
1/15/86	37 Pub. Hearing	1	1
1/15/86	38 Photogrammetry	1	1
1/15/86	39 Consultant Design	1	1
1/15/86	40	1	1
1/15/86	41	1	1
1/15/86	42	1	1
1/15/86	43	1	1
1/15/86	44	1	1
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Airports District Office
FAA Building, Room 2
Helena Regional Airport
Helena, Montana 59601



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OMAHA DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS
9014 U.S. POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102-4978

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

March 5, 1986

Planning Division

SUBJECT: F78-2(5)27 Absarokee-Columbus

February 4, 1986

Mr. Stephen C. Kologri, P.E.
Chief, Preconstruction Bureau
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620

Ref: F 78-2(5)27
Absarokee - Columbus

Dear Mr. Kologri:

We have reviewed the subject highway proposal and have no objections.

Sincerely,

Harold N. Handke
Harold N. Handke
Airports Certification
Safety Inspector

Date Recd.	Preconst.	Initial
Act	Info	Attach
	MAIL ROUTE	
	30	
	30 Eng Specialist	
	31 Contract Plans	
	31 Loc. Road Design	
	31 Environment	
	31 Hydraulic	
	35 Surface Design	
	36 Traffic	
	37 Pub Hearing	
	37 Photogrammetry	
	38 Consultant Design	

Date Recd.	Preconst.	Initial
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	31 Contract Plans	
	31 Loc. Road Design	
	31 Environment	
	31 Hydraulic	
	35 Surface Design	
	36 Traffic	
	37 Pub Hearing	
	37 Photogrammetry	
	38 Consultant Design	

Mr. Stephen C. Kologri, P.E.
Chief, Preconstruction Bureau
Department of Highways
State of Montana
2701 Prospect
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Kologri:

Thank you for your letter of December 30, 1985, in which you solicited our comments regarding your proposed Federal Aid Highway project on Montana Highway 78 (FAP 78). We have reviewed the proposed project and offer you the following comments.

The design of the proposed project should insure that the project is in compliance with flood plain management criterion of Stillwater County and the State of Montana. As a minimum, the design should insure that the 100-year floodwater surface elevation of any stream affected is not increased more than one foot relative to pre-project conditions.

Since Federal funding is being utilized, a cultural resources survey may be necessary. We suggest that you consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer in Helena, if you have not done so already. Both Absarokee and Columbus each contain one house that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Neither of these houses should be impacted by the proposed highway upgrade.

If the construction of the proposed project involves the placement of fill, permanent or temporary, into a waterway and/or adjacent wetland, a permit pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act will be required. When project plans are completed, they should be sent to the:

Corps of Engineers
c/o DNRC/CDD, Attention: Eob McInerney
32 South Ewing
Helena, Montana 59620

Thank you again for this review opportunity.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Gorton
Richard D. Gorton
Chief, Environmental
Analysis Branch
Planning Division

March 17, 1986

Mr. Stephen C. Kologi, P.E.
Chief, Preconstruction Bureau
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect
Helena, MT 59620

RE: F 78-2(5)27
Absarokee -- Columbus

Dear Mr. Kologi:

You recently requested information pertaining to the referenced project.

It appears that this project will involve several designated floodplains. Therefore, a floodplain development permit will have to be obtained from the Stillwater County planner.

It also appears that this project will affect irrigation facilities. Consequently, the timing and method of construction should be planned so as not to disrupt the exercise of existing water rights. Also, project design should include adequate culverts to allow for continued water use. For additional information on the water rights that may be affected, please contact Keith Kerbel of our Water Rights Field Office at 1537 Avenue D, Suite 352, in Billings (phone 657-2105).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Charles I. Massman
CAROLE I. MASSMAN
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

CM/js

Enclosure

cc: Ron Guse
Keith Kerbel
John Hamill

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



TED SCHWINDEN, GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-6699

1520 East 6th Ave

Date Recd.	Prepared	Initial	Attach
	30		
	30 Eng. Schedule		
	31 Civil Plan		
	32 Lic. Paid Design		
	33 Environment		
	34 Hydraulic		
	35 Surveying Design		
	36 Traffic		
	37 Pub. Hearing		
	38 Photogrammetry		
	39 Consultant Design		
	Billings		
	File		

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

RECEIVED
JUN 13 1986
FISHERIES DIV.

Office Memorandum

TO : Ralph Boland
FROM : Ray Berntsen, Charles Eustace, Steve McMullin
SUBJECT: Highway Project #78

DATE: 04-29-86

The following are comments from the Region on proposed highway project near Absarokee, Montana.

Parks

The only involvement that parks might have would be signing and approach roads into fishing access areas on the Stillwater. Approach signing distance is determined primarily by the road classification and road configuration. Usually we determine approach signs to be between 1/8 to 1/4 mile away. I would be happy to work with field people on the ground when they are at that point. We certainly hope that every measure will be taken to have access remain open to the public during construction.

Wildlife

Removing curves and hills help increase highway speed which can be expected to increase night time collisions with deer. Because of the highway location it lies directly between daytime security cover and late evening-early morning feeding areas along its entire length from Columbus to Absarokee. To minimize the amount of time spent by deer directly adjacent to the highway, a gravel skirt of at least 20 feet in width should be on either side of the pavement. Reseeding of barrow pits should be a monoculture such as crested wheatgrass. Broadleaf forbs should be avoided entirely such as alfalfa, clover, etc. Deer crossing signs should be placed at frequent intervals. In areas of especially severe concentration, under passes in conjunction with 8 foot high fences funneling deer to the underpass have been shown to be quite effective in Colorado.

Fish

We have documented occasional use of some of the tributaries in the project area by spawning rainbow trout. Consequently, all stream crossings should be designed to guarantee fish passage. All of the streams crossed in the project area are small, with limited sediment transport capacity. Construction activities should be handled so as to minimize additions of sediment to the stream which could reduce rainbow trout spawning habitat quality.

RECEIVED

JUL 31 1986

MONTANA DEPT. OF HIGHWAYS
BILLINGS, MONTANA

Mr. Roy Ventura
District Engineer
Montana Department of Highways
P. O. Box 20437
Pioneer Station
Billings, MT 59102

Dear Mr. Ventura:

Yesterday I had the opportunity to visit with your surveying engineers out at my place on Highway 78 and Joe Hill Creek. We had a nice brief discussion and they informed me you are in the preliminary planning for improvement of this highway.

My reason for writing is that I would like to inform you that I am very anxious to see the improvement in this dangerous highway and wish to cooperate fully, Roy, in any way to facilitate this project.

As your records probably indicate, the corner and bridge at Joe Hill Creek has been a killer. Just this past spring a person nearly lost his life missing the turn, hitting the bridge, and ending up upside down in the creek. This was the fourth time in the short time I have lived here that this has happened.

I own the land on both sides of the highway and would be very willing to make available land on the northwest side of the highway so that the turn could be made much more gradual and a new bridge be erected. The minor irrigation problems that exist would be easily handled, in fact, an improvement over the present maintenance and deterioration problem we have with an existing siphon.

There are many other people living and using this highway, Roy, who would be very happy to cooperate with you and your department in any way possible. If I can be of any service to you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will do whatever possible to encourage others to facilitate your job and bring about a safer roadway.

We are all aware that the traffic has increased dramatically since the mining activity has flumed up at Nye. We are all holding our breath to see what is going to happen once full scale development begins later this fall. Hopefully, the highway project can be expedited in preparation of this increased traffic load.

Your consideration in these matters would be very much appreciated by everyone in Stillwater County.

Sincerely yours,

Kent B. Williams
Kent B. Williams

KENT B. WILLIAMS
P. O. BOX 839
COLUMBUS, MT 59019

ACT	1	BILLINGS DISTRICT
	1	District Engineer
	1	Suprv. Const.
	1	Field Project Mgrs.
	1	Engr. Officer
	1	Chief Field Maint. (BI) (L)
	1	Main. Suprvs.
	1	Shop Suprv.
	1	Engineering Services Suprv.
	1	Maintenance Suprv. Design
	1	Right-of-Way Suprv.
	1	Centralized Services Suprv.
	1	Personnel Spoc.
	1	Payroll
	1	Records
	1	Training
	1	Public Affairs
	1	Telephone Rm.
	1	Director's Office
	1	Chief Clerk
	1	Chief Mail
	1	Chief Janitor
	1	Chief Security
	1	Chief Traffic
	1	Chief Parking
	1	Chief Maintenance
	1	Chief Engineering
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	1	Chief Respect
	1	Chief Honor

Fish, Wildlife and Game

JUL 16 1987

**MONTANA DEPT. OF HIGHWAYS
BILLINGS, MONTANA**

Dear Mr. Kologi:

RE: F 78-2(5)27

Absarokee - Columbus

Please keep us informed as you proceed toward construction. If you need more information from us, please call me at 441-3750.

Sincerely,

Patience Oliver

SD/LR

cc: Don Malisani
Ray Berntsen[illegible]

Dtnr Hcd., Precornt. Q-7-10-81	Initial	
	Attach	
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	30 Eng. Specialties	
	31 Chemical Plant	
	36 Loe Road Design	
	33 Environment	
	34 Hydraulic	
	36 Surfacing Drains	
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	P.R. Bondino	
	Info	
Act		

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Comms. Digest 59019
November 20, 1987

Mr. Gary J. Wicks, Director
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Wicks:

With reference to the proposed new alignment for Highway No. 78 from Columbus to Absarokee, I note from your aerial photo that the proposed new alignment differs considerably from the present alignment in the S.W. 1/4 of Section 28, T. 2 S. of R. 20 E. P.N.N. and lots 5 and 6 in Section 29 T. 2 S. of R. 20 E. P.N.N..

The proposed new alignment will destroy at least five (5) twenty thousand dollar (\$20,000.00) building sites, and completely cut off my winter livestock water, as well as ruin the west end of my hay field. It just so happens that I have kept a record of what each part of my fields produce each time they are cut and baled. This particular part of this hay field that will be ruined for the proposed road, over a period of seven (7) years has produced an average of 187.57 good heavy bales per year with very little labor and expense.

The proposed new alignment will not only ruin this end of my ranch, which I have owned since 1949, it will be very expensive and entirely unnecessary as was the widening of the shoulders in 1983 on the curve you are attempting to eliminate. It will not accomplish what you are trying to do. Everyone in this area seems to think it was a waste of the tax-payers money.

For your information Mr. Wicks, this road has been in place for at least 75 to 100 years or longer, and for at least the last 37 years my wife or I have went around this curve at least four (4) times each day, and prior to October 26, 1971, (the date of my last drink) both drunk and sober, and neither of us have had an accident on the curve or between here and Columbus or Absarokee, and no one coming to our home or leaving our home have had any accidents on this curve or road. I can also get you at least over 100 witnesses that will swear under oath, that they have traveled over this particular part of this road at least 10 times or more each week, accident free, 10, 20 and 30 years or longer.

Gary J. Wicks.

Years ago in the summertime when the road was perfectly dry a man and wife and two passengers drove straight north at about 80 miles an hour into the cottonwood trees and the wife was killed. This happened about two thirty (2:30) in the morning. Later the man was tried and fined for drunken driving.

Seven or eight years ago a couple of high school girls, that should of been on the school bus had an accident about seven or eight hundred feet east of the curve. I believe one died at the scene and the other died later. I can refer you to several people that these girls passed before they got this far and they say they were definatley speeding. There have been a lot more accidents on other parts of this road than on this particular, practically UNMARKED CURVE. There is one curve sign way down on the east end that is so high you hardly notice it, and the same on the south end. Most all curves on this road are marked much better than this one. I would suggest that you immediately put at least 8 or 10 large signs on each end of this curve. Like the ones you have on the north side of the Yellowstone Bridge. I think that would go a long ways towards solving your problem.

I will answer your question before you ask it. No I am not an engineer, but I have worked for the Montana Department of Highways, and I have also done quite a bit of construction work. When I first looked at your aerial photo and discussed it with some of my friends and neighbors they all said that I didn't have anything to worry about because the Highway Department was 'nt crazy enough to build a road over that hill, but after making a trip to Ennis last week and seeing first hand what is happening on the madisonian hill between Morris and McAllister I decided I had better start doing something to protect myself. That is the fourth road I have seen built over that hill in my life time, and I will bet it is the most expensive, and also the poorest.

If you really want to eliminate this curve, and have a lot better, safer, and much less expensive highway, it can be brought in on a slight, gentle curve that will be in the open and not in the shade, by going west of Mrs. Matovich's old house and shed in lots 5 and 6 in section 29 T. 2 S. of R. J E. P.M.N. It could be taken 200 to 400 feet north and completely eliminate the shaded curve. This might bring it slightly through my irrigated land, but I can assure you it will be a lot less expensive for right-of-way and construction than where your proposed alignment has been explained to me.

Mrs. Matovich built a new home about a year ago that is about in the path of your proposed new alignment. She has abandoned the old house I speak of.

I believe Mr. Wicks, you will agree that no one can build roads that will guarantee safety for drunks and hot rodders.

As I am very much concerned about your proposed new alignment through my,

Mr. Gary J. Wicks.

property, and the severe damage it is going to cause me, including the elimination of my winter livestock cater, and in order that I may take the necessary steps to protect myself, as I have no intentions of settling idly by until after it happens, will you please keep me very well informed of your proposals regarding this part of the project.

Thanking you in advance, and with kindest regards, I am,

Yours/very truly,

c: Mr. James Goetz
Attorney at law
35 North Grand
Bozeman, Montana 59715

Herman J. Erie
Herman J. Erie
c/o The Wigwam Ranch, P.O. Box 836
Columbus, Montana 59619

WILLIAM GAUTHIER
HC 54 Box 43
Columbus, Montana 59019

HKM Associates
Engineers/Planners
P.O. Box 51213
Billings, Montana 59107

MMR 20 4309
HKM ASSOCIATES

Dear Sirs:
The duration of irrigating on this ditch varies according to the weather. It has run from the twentn of April till the middle of October. It runs about sixty cubic feet per second. Once in a while when we get a down pour of rain the ditch gets more water from the run off in the hills, and the bridges over the ditch should take care of that.
The numbers that I marked on the map will point out what I am going to explain to you. The numbers three, four and seven are highway crossings. There are cant bridges. There are all to short. Number four had a cat loader dropped on it and it made a bulge in the cement, it should be fixed. They are repair it if pouring cement over the bridge.
The Rosehouse Ditch runs as far as Mexican Joe Creek. From there on a couple of ranches down below take it over. I drew the outline of the ditch on the map, and they do have trouble with the ditch and the highway towards the lower end. I'll give you the name of the person to write too, as I'll explain it all. Bernard Vandervy

Post Office Box
Columbus, Montana 59019

Sincerely,
William Gauthier
William Gauthier
HC 54 Box 43
Columbus, Montana 59019

Ph. 328-4105



BEAR TOOTH RANCH • Columbus, Montana 59019 • (406) 325-5366

March 31, 1988

HKM Associates
P.O. Box 31318
Billings, MT 59107

Attention: Richard L. Jacobson

Gentlemen:

Enclosed is your aerial photomap on which we have indicated in red the beginning and end of the Whitebird Ditch irrigation system, the three highway crossings and the areas where the ditch is adjacent to the existing highway 78.

Our ranch office also manages the Scott Ditch, but we note that you have requested the data from neighbor Lee Adsit.

The Whitebird Ditch water right dates back to August 29, 1904 for at least a portion of the ditch which flows through Beartooth Hereford Ranch. We are not familiar with the total volume or flow rate of the ditch with its headgate in Section 22, T3S, R19E, but the Water Rights Bureau in Billings could provide that data to you. The irrigation season normally is from May 1 to November 4. At times some individual users share the water by using all the total water at one time and one place.

Let us know if there is more information we may provide to you regarding Whitebird Ditch.

Sincerely,

BEAR TOOTH RANCH

George Ellis
George Ellis

GE:sw

Enc.



Stillwater County, Planning for the Future

Box 981
Phone 406-322-4430
Columbus, Montana 59019

April 4, 1988

Richard L. Jacobson
HKM Associates
P.O. Box 31318
Airport Industrial Park
Billings, MT 59107

Re: F 78-2-(5) 27 Absarokee - Columbus

Dear Mr. Jacobson:

Thank you for the project location map and aerial photo showing the extent of the proposed project. The existing population of Stillwater County is estimated at 6,700. The projected population is 7,090 in the year 1990 and 7,530 in the year 2000. There are no ethnic or minority groups or neighborhoods along this route. The unemployment rate in Stillwater County is currently at 7.4% compared to 10.4% one year ago. The mining industry is expanding and the agricultural sector has been declining slightly. Construction, manufacturing, trade, service, government, finance, insurance, real estate, transportation, communication and utility sectors of the economy have been relatively stable.

There is no zoning for land use along this route and the actual land uses are mixed. The current land use is predominantly agricultural and residential outside the Absarokee area with some commercial and light industrial uses. Irrigation ditches along the route are a special concern. The predominant land use along this route in Absarokee is commercial and residential with some light industrial. The Absarokee School properties are adjacent to this route. Several water and sewer lines cross this route in Absarokee.

The Stillwater City-County Planning Board expressed support for this project after the Department of Highways issued the letter of intent. The project is expected to improve traffic safety with minimal environmental damage. The Planning Board supported a proposal for a bike path or wide enough shoulders to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Irrigation ditches were a special concern and it was suggested that pasture land be used for Right-of-Way instead of irrigated hayland.

If you need any additional information, please let me know at your convenience.

Best Regards,

John Beaudry
John Beaudry
Planning Director

United States Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
Columbus Field Office
P.O. Box 415
Columbus, MT 59019

April 11, 1988

HKM Associates
Airport Industrial Park
P.O. Box 31318
Billings, MT 59107

Dear Mr. Jacobson:

In reference to your inquiry dated March 31, 1988,

Farmland of Statewide Importance exists in every section along the entire route of reconstruction of Route 78, particularly north of Absarokee. Prime Farmland is prevalent along the route south of the confluence of West Rosebud and Antelope Crooks, in the section north of the confluence, and along the last two miles of the road before it reaches Columbus. I've attached a Prime Farmland map for your use, as well as an existing land use map and a Stillwater County Soil Survey.

I know of no environmental problems this project may create as long as it follows the general route of the old road. It would be a good idea to contact all the irrigation ditch groups on the route. Enclosed is a letter sent to the Montana Department of Highways on January 30, 1986 listing the known ditches along the route.

If you have any further questions, please contact this office at 322-5359.

Sincerely,

Geri J. Sullivan
Geri J. Sullivan
Soil Conservationist

encl.

ABSAROOKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 52

P.O. Box 430
Absarokee, Montana 59001
Phone (406) 328-4583

Paul J. Jenkins
Elementary Principal

G. Michael Reynolds
Superintendent

Phyllis West
Clerk

April 27, 1988

Mr. Richard L. Jacobsen
HKM Associates Engineering Firm
P. O. Box 31318
Billings, MT 59107

Dear Mr. Jacobsen:

I have your letter of March 31 advising us of your involvement with the design of Montana Route 78, Stillwater County.

You asked for specific information regarding the following:

1. Crosswalks - It is our intention by the means of a bond issue to construct a new high school immediately across from the athletic field. Therefore, this will have some bearing on the use of the crosswalk to the entrance to the football complex. Our enrollment will be increased by some additional ninety students because of mining impact than the present. Because the school is that much closer to the football field, we are bound to see a certain amount of increased use of a crosswalk to reach the football field. It is noted though that we do use the football field quite extensively now for football, track and physical education.
2. Our future plans will include a new high school and junior high on the property immediately across the highway from the football field. As of yet, we have done no site development so I cannot pinpoint for you the exact location of the school but it will be located as far north on the property as is feasible.
3. Our only other concern is the curve itself in the road. If the scope of your project will allow for straightening the road out, we feel it



We are proud to be called "The Huskies!"

is in the best interest for the safety of the children that this be done. If we need to talk about cutting into a portion of the school property to straighten out some of that curve, please contact me.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to give me a call at your convenience.

Sincerely,

G. Michael Reynolds

G. Michael Reynolds
Superintendent

April 27, 1988

11-07-88 0110 (19)
-Melia, 707 59558
May 31, 1988 24051.137

Shirley Ted Schwinden
State Capital
Helena, MT 59620

F 78-2(5)27
ABSAUCKEE - COLUMBUS

Dear Shirley Schwinden:

I am writing because a friend's mother
is experiencing great a civil right now as a
result of one of the state's departments.

My maternal grandmother in her late
eighties. She was a single parent back when they
weren't so common. She taught school all her
life until her retirement.

Two years ago she took her life's savings
and had a house built. It's a comfortable house,
not extravagant by any means. The house sits on a
beautiful lot just outside Columbus.

The state highway department has decided
to change the course of the highway that passes
just below her property. The change will take
the road right through her property and finally
close it. Her house.

It certainly doesn't seem to me that
our system is working for her. She believed
all the talk, all the lies - the quiet American
way. Now, not only is her peaceful retirement
going to be destroyed, but her property value.

has disappeared -
sell and build in another spot west of the
chase. Is

Isn't there something that can be done
to help her? I believe other people's property
is also being affected by the course change.

There is a turnpike curve in the road
where they are changing courses. Many people
in the Columbus area believe a lot of state
money could be saved and property problems
avoided if the curve were just marked better -
perhaps with a flashing light - rather than
build a new road.

I didn't know to whom I should
plead - Mrs. Matovich's case, so I
just went to the top. I hope there is
something you or someone else can do.
It really isn't fair to her.

Sincerely,
Katy Thompson

State Historic Preservation Office

Montana Historical Society

Mailing Address: 225 North Roberts • Helena, MT 59620-9910
Office Address: 102 Broadway • Helena, MT • (406) 444-7719

August 10, 1988

Ms. Mitzi Rossillon
Archaeologist, Environmental Unit
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Absarokee-Columbus
F78-2(5)27

Dear Mitzi:

Thank you for submitting Janene's report on the project referenced above for our review and comments. The project presented a complex set of resources and management alternatives which Janene handled most skillfully. We concur with HRA's methods and results and agree with the vast majority of their recommendations. We are prepared to concur that the eleven properties and one irrigation district recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register are, indeed, eligible. The only thing I would add is that 245T190, the Cobblestone Garage, should be considered eligible under Criterion A as well as under C.

In addition to the properties we all agree are eligible, I have a few additions for our mutual consideration. At 245T171, although the whole complex clearly appears to retain too little integrity to qualify for listing, I believe the main house (recorded as Structure 1), might be considered eligible under C for its distinctive use of local materials in construction. The solar panels are not permanently affixed to the house, and the addition, while distracting, does not appear disqualifying. The Sandstone and Cobblestone schools of Absorkee are listed in the National Register, and we have agreed that the Cobblestone Garage is also eligible. The house in question illustrates another facet of the local affinity for use of that material, and seems sufficiently separable from the remainder of the farmstead to stand as eligible on its own merits.

At 245T29, even though the fields once containing the Agency have been plowed, it is difficult to agree nothing worthy of preservation remains in the absence of testing. There is some mention of "cellars" west of the highway, which would be difficult to destroy with a plow. A manuscript in our files supplied by Isabelle Johnson of Absarokee mentions "Indian ovens remaining in the bank to the north of the present road" and 16 graves near Butcher Creek. She also notes that adobe was manufactured on site, and a "lime pit" remains to mark that activity. Figure 50 of HRA's report (p.67) shows a field marked by mounds and depressions which could still indicate features of the buildings and facilities at the Agency. I note a power or phone line also runs through that field. Was any work done there prior to its installation? Does the Crow Tribe have pertinent information or any interest in the area?

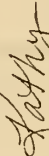
Rossillon
August 10, 1988
page 2

Johnson remembers adobe bricks from Agency buildings were hauled off to nearby ranches, where they were used again for buildings and generally succeeded over. That may have some indirect bearing on construction of the main house at 245T160. Structure 1 at that site, too, may be both early and associated with the Agency. If that structure is in any danger from the present project, some further attempts to document its age and associations should be made. Isabelle might be a good source of information, although I note that Janene has already spoken with her.

Finally, the Agency Ditch, which may indeed be the only surviving resource associated with Crow Agency II, was lined with trees just after its construction. The vegetation was planted to stem erosion, and reportedly remains today. That feature would be considered an integral component of 245T204.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and please call if discussion of these additional points will suffice.

Sincerely,



Katherine M. Huppe
Historical Survey Reviewer

cc: Janene Caywood
Isabelle Johnson

File: Comp/MDOH/Absarokee-Columbus
NR/Consensus Determination files

Due Recd. Precedence	MAIL ROUTE	Attach
10	30 Ling. Specimens	
10	31 Contact Plans	
10	32 Loc. Road Design	
10	33 Environment	
10	34 Hydraulic	
10	35 Surveying Design	
10	36 Trailing	
10	37 Pub. Hearing	
10	38 Photographs	
10	39 Construction Design	
10	40	
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SECTION 4(f) STATEMENT

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Description

The proposed action consists of the reconstruction of a portion of Montana Route 78 (FAP 78) in Stillwater County, Montana. The proposed project, known as the Absarokee-Columbus project, will extend from a point approximately 5.7 miles south of Absarokee to a point approximately one-half mile south of Columbus near the intersection with FAS 421. The total length of the project is approximately 19.1 miles.

Project improvements include grading, drainage, surfacing, signing, pavement markings, guardrail, topsoiling, seeding, irrigation system revisions, obliteration of the existing roadway, and necessary utility relocation. In order to facilitate construction, this project will be split into two smaller projects. The exact location of the project split will be determined as the design progresses. Construction is tentatively planned for 1992.

The primary objectives of the proposed action are as follows:

- to reconstruct the roadway to provide a roadway surface capable of handling projected traffic demands and loads,
- to enhance highway convenience and safety and reduce accidents by improving the horizontal and vertical alignments, and
- to provide a modern highway facility compatible with the human and natural environment.

The existing highway is a narrow, deteriorating, two lane facility originally constructed in 1935 and improved in 1945. The general alignment is characterized by numerous sharp curve and rolling grades. The present horizontal and vertical alignments, coupled with the width and condition of the roadway, contribute to unsafe conditions.

1988 Average Daily Traffic Volume (ADT) on Montana Route 78 in the project area was approximately 1500 vehicles per day. Projected traffic volume for the design year, Year 2012, is 2500 vehicles per day. The Design Hourly Volume (DHV) is 330 vehicles per hour. The existing facility is not capable of adequately handling this projected traffic load. Due to the existing highway's design characteristics, lack of an adequate roadway base and extent of deterioration, complete reconstruction is required.

II. SECTION 4(f) RESOURCES

The Montana Department of Highways (MDOH) contracted with Historical Research Associates (HRA) of Missoula, Montana, to conduct a cultural resources inventory of the Absarokee-Columbus Project area (MDOH Project F 78-2(5)27). In association with the cultural resources inventory, a limited amount of archeological testing was performed at site 24ST89, the site of the Crow Agency between 1875 and 1883.

Several sites in the project vicinity are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. However, only two of these properties will be physically impacted and are therefore considered 4(f) properties. These are the Riverside Inn (24ST164) and the Lower Stillwater River Irrigation District. The latter consists of six ditches including the Agency Ditch, Shane Ditch, Kem-Mulherin Ditch, Roadhouse Ditch, Scott Ditch and the White Ditch.

Another area of 4(f) involvement is the location of the existing athletic field and new school site presently being developed immediately south of Absarokee.

The locations of the 4(f) sites in relation to the new highway centerline are shown on Figures 1 and 2. The description of the sites and the elements of the highway/section 4(f) involvement follows:

SITE NUMBER/NAME: 24ST164, The Riverside Inn

Site Description

The Riverside Inn is located about two miles north of Absarokee on the east bank of the Stillwater River. The portion of the site that lies north of the county road that divides the site has been altered to the point where it no longer represents the historic events with which it is associated. The main dwelling at the site, where guests were lodged and fed, has been reduced in scale by about two-thirds and has been extensively remodeled. In addition, the setting has been further altered by construction of the new garage. The structures located on the south side of the road (Figure 3) appear to be intact.

The structures that lie on the south side of the county road form an outbuilding complex. The available information suggests that these buildings were constructed around 1905. Structure 5, a large, one and one-half story, gambrel-roofed barn, is the most prominent building at the site (Figure 4). An early owner of the site constructed this building for use as a horse barn, and it was converted sometime during the early 1920's for use as a dance hall. A distinctive characteristic of this wood frame barn is the small-paned, double, casement style windows. A flat-roofed projection extends over the front entryway, and is supported on the north end by two decorative,





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 ABSAROOKEE to
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 FIGURE 1
 4(f) SITES

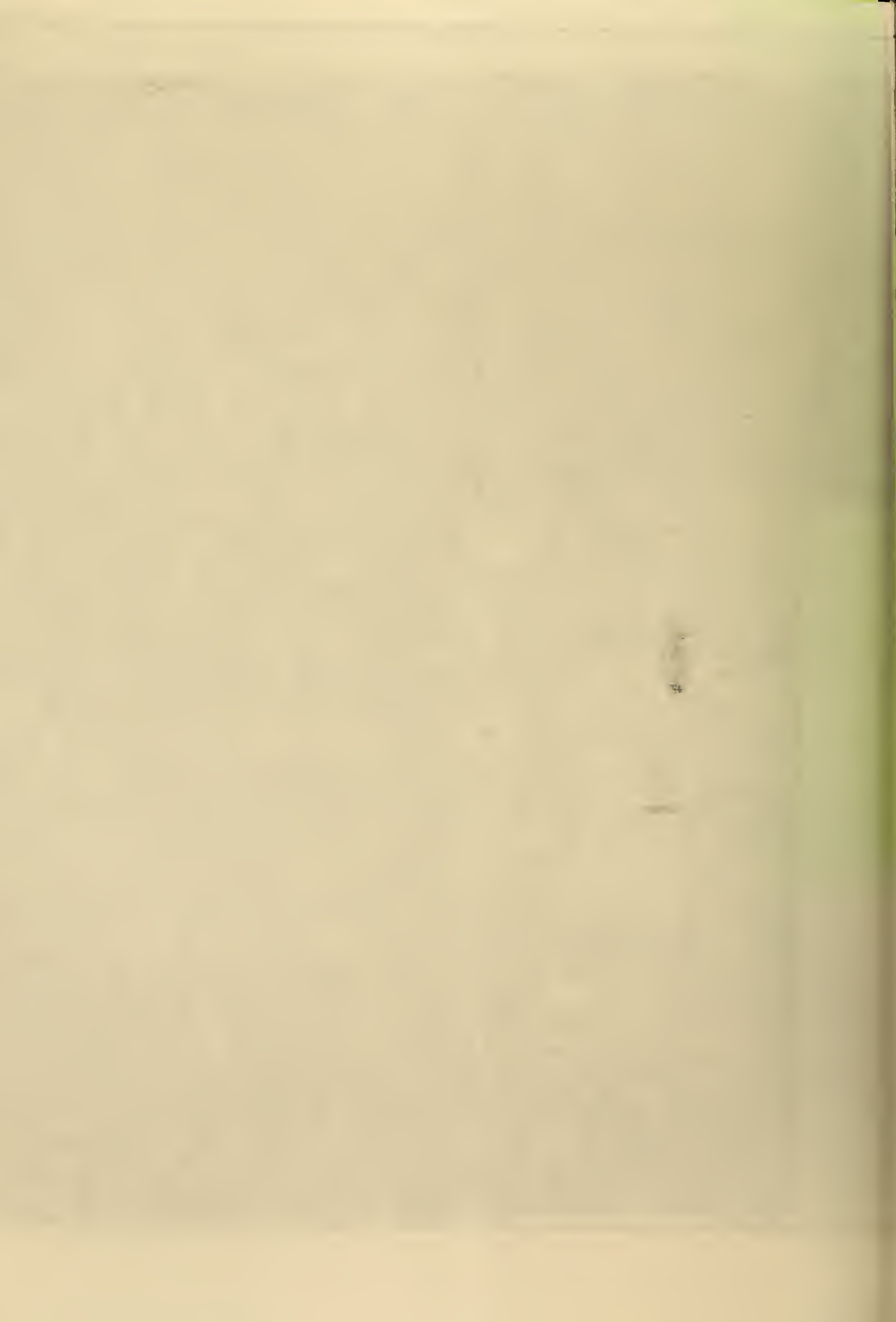




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F 78-2(5) 27
 ABSAROKEE to
 COLUMBUS
 FIGURE 2
 4(f) SITES

concrete piers. The foundation appears to be made of concrete, and the roof is covered with corrugated metal. The south elevation contains a set of double hinged doors that open out into a wooden corral. According to Alice Barron (1987), the current site owner, this elevation once had a large stone fireplace that has since been removed.

Structure 6 is another, smaller barn located at the south end of the corral (Figure 5). This also is a wood frame, gambrel-roofed building, but is much smaller in scale. The building has a corrugated metal roof, and a concrete foundation. A small ventilator with a pyramidal roof is located in the center of the roof ridge. Two shed-roofed side wings are located along the northeast and southwest facing elevations.

Structure 7 is a one story, wood frame building with a gable roof (Figure 6). Currently, the building is used as a garage and has one large sliding door in the northeast-facing elevation. The structure has one interior brick chimney and a stone foundation.

Feature 2 also is located on the south side of the site. This is a large cleared area, roughly rectangular in shape. It marks the former location of a structure.

Historical Development

As stated above, this site is currently divided by a county road that leads to a bridge over the Stillwater River. However, the two parcels were once part of a 156-acre homestead claim patented by John Mulherin in January 1902 (Deed Book 6, page 252, Office of the Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, Montana). Annin (1964:III) indicates that Mulherin and his wife, Martha, came to the Stillwater area soon after it was opened to non-Indian settlement (in about

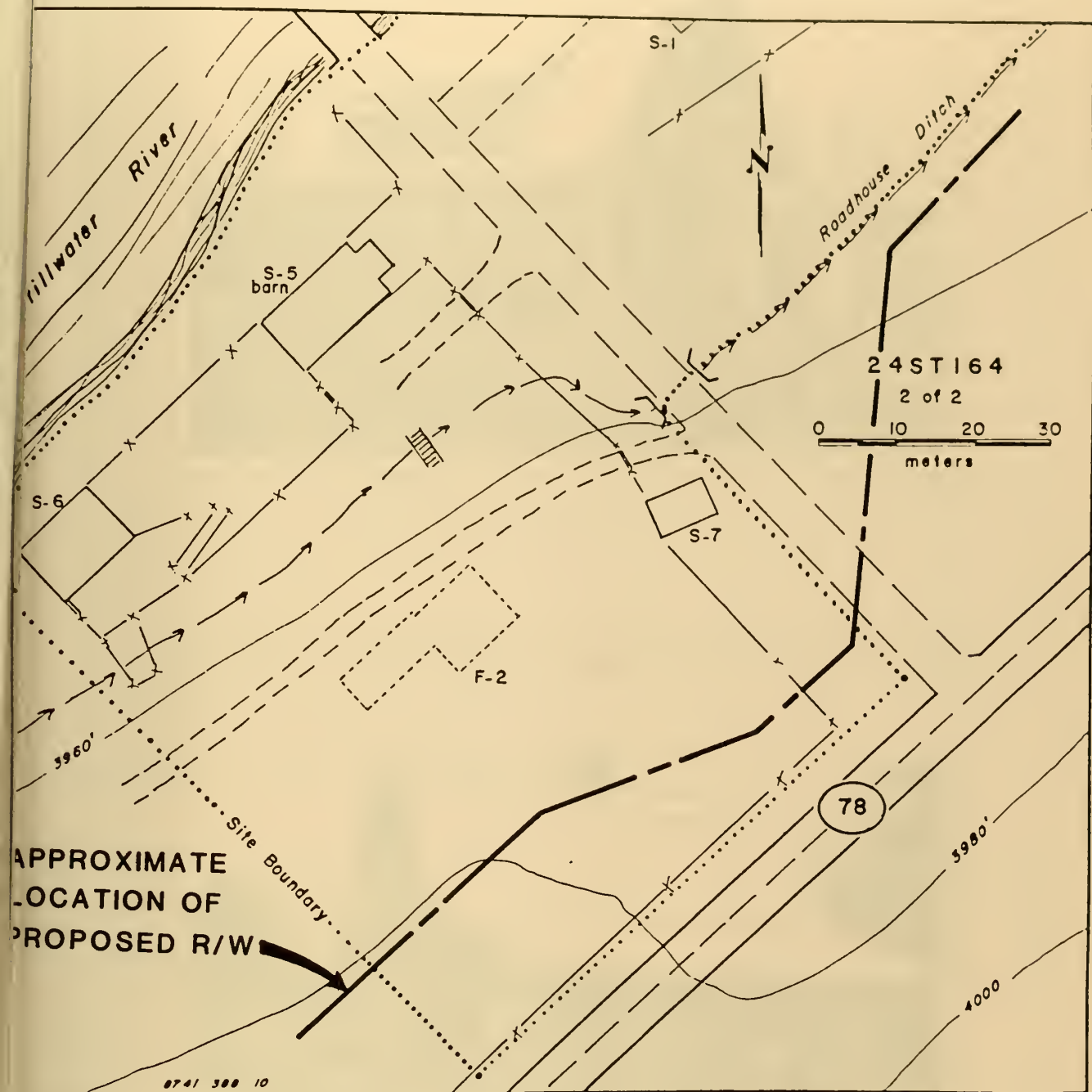


Figure 3 Plan map for south portion of site 24ST164, the Riverside Inn.



Figure 4 Northeast and Southeast elevations of Structure 5



Figure 5 Southwest elevation of Structure 6.

1892). Therefore, it is probable that the Mulherins had been in the area and possibly were living on the land for almost a decade prior to patenting their homestead claim.

In 1903, the Mulherins sold the property to Nancy and John McBroom. In 1907, the McBrooms sold the property Solomon A. Leaverton for \$5,000.00 (Deed Book 6, page 33, Office of the Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, Montana). Local informants indicated that Leaverton operated the property as both a working ranch and as a vacation resort (Kern 1988; Hufford 1988; Barron 1988). Leaverton had regular customers from Billings, who came to the Riverside Inn to fish the Stillwater River. He lodged the guests in a large, three story house and provided meals to people who stayed overnight. One of the Leaverton's sons drove a freight line between Columbus and Absarokee, and often stayed at the ranch with his passengers (Hufford 1988). Annin (1964:III-312) indicates that Leaverton established the Riverside Inn in 1905. The Leavertons may have occupied the site in 1905, although the formal property transfer did not occur until 1907. The resort remained open into the early 1930's.

Statement of Significance

Portions of this site are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, under criteria (a) and (c). The south part of the site, which contains the outbuildings from the Leaverton Ranch, is in very good condition.

The buildings generally have been well maintained, and the only noncompatible material that has been added to the structures is the corrugated metal for the roofs on the two barns. This complex of structures appears to be eligible under criterion



Figure 6 Northeast and northwest elevations of Structure 7.

(a), since it clearly represents the "working component" of an early ranching endeavor, established prior to 1910. The horse barn, the dairy barn, and the associated corral, as well as the garage, function together as a visual unit and represent a work area where routine chores associated with livestock handling were carried out. The site also functions as a local landmark and as a representation of a community gathering place. Although remembrances of specific site usage vary between individuals, all of the local residents who were interviewed indicated that the big red barn was used during the 1920's and 1930's as a dance hall. People from Absarokee and the surrounding area gathered at the Riverside Inn for Saturday night dances in the barn, and dinner at the house on the north side of the county road. Although the inn itself is no longer recognizable as such, local people remember and associate the big red barn with this period. With the exception of the removal of the fireplace from the southern elevation, the barn looks today as it did in the 1920's.

In addition to the significance of the site as a local gathering place, the main barn possesses individual architectural distinction (criterion c). This building is a good example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture popular in the United States between approximately 1880 and 1955. The structure displays elements of the Craftsman style in the gambrel eaves and the entrance roof with exposed rafter ends and concrete piers.

LOWER STILLWATER RIVER HISTORIC IRRIGATION DISTRICT

An extensive system of major and minor irrigation ditches occur within the project corridor. Figure 7 shows the locations of the historic ditches that have segments along the length of the project.

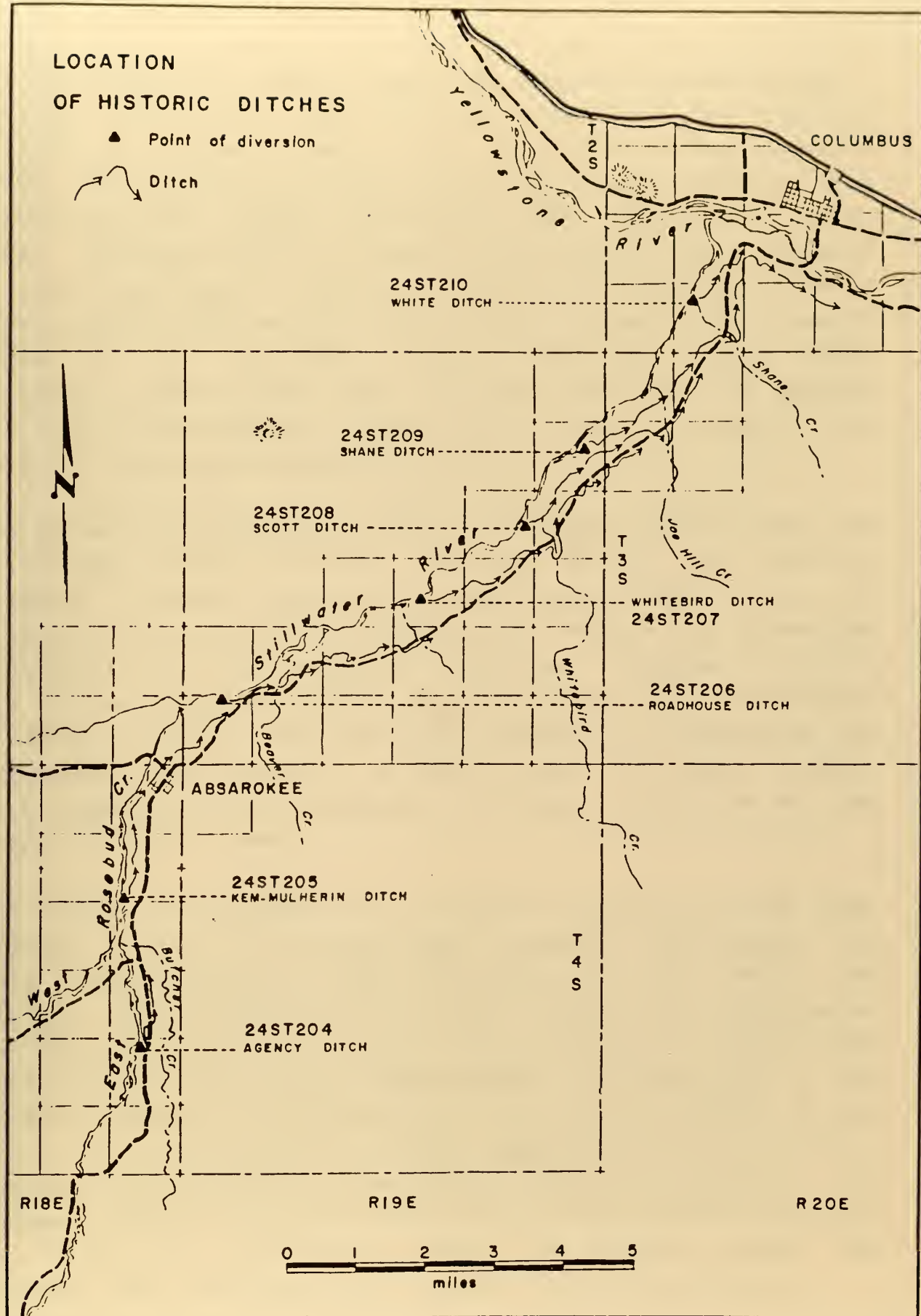


Figure 7. Map showing the points of diversion and courses of the seven recorded irrigation ditches.

For the most part, these ditches are simple, unlined features, some of which have associated features such as concrete culverts or flumes. Most of the irrigation systems recorded within the project area appear to have been built prior to 1900 (although water rights consistently were filed at a later date). GLO plats for the entire project corridor were surveyed in 1899, and show an impressive system of irrigation ditches, drawing water from Butcher Creek, East Rosebud Creek, Rosebud Creek, and the Stillwater River. The wide bottom lands adjacent to these stream channels proved excellent for growing hay, and provided winter shelter for the bands of sheep kept by most area ranchers during this period.

The system of irrigation ditches in the East Rosebud Creek and Stillwater River drainages recorded during the cultural resource inventory represents improvements made by one or several families who were attempting to improve the production capabilities of their homestead properties. Landowners along a few of the larger ditch systems incorporated, and the members in ditch companies were assessed a yearly, per-share fee for maintenance and service. In other cases, individual members were responsible for maintenance and repair of features serving their individual lands.

The early establishment of irrigation ditches in the area appears to have influenced later community development, as well. Most notable is the relationship of the PTW to the ditches. The course of the original county road, constructed in 1891 and 1892, was plotted around ditches and open lands suitable for agricultural development. Construction of the current roadway in 1935 basically followed the route of the county road, and caused only slight disturbance to the existing ditches. Examination of the 1935 engineering plans for the highway indicates that the main impact to the ditches consisted of putting in new culverts where the roadway crossed the ditches, and a few minor realignments of the ditch channels.

The elaborate pattern of ditches in relation to the natural and man-made landscapes of fields and pastures is representative of an important aspect of agricultural settlement during the early Historic Period in Montana. Although some of the ditches discussed below appear to possess individual historic significance, they are best considered as contributing elements to a larger historic irrigation district.

The proposed Lower Stillwater River Historic irrigation District includes all ditches built between 1875 and 1920. The beginning of the district's period of significance corresponds with establishment of a permanent Crow Agency at Butcher Creek (and construction of the Agency Ditch), and the end of the period of significance corresponds with the end of the second land rush in the Stillwater Basin.

Descriptions and historical backgrounds of each of the six ditches that comprise the district (Agency Ditch, Kem-Mulherin Ditch, Roadhouse Ditch, Scott Ditch, Shane Ditch and White Ditch) is not provided here but is available at MDOH Environmental Unit upon request.

ABSAROKEE SCHOOL SITE

The final area of 4(f) involvement occurs at the site of the new Absarokee school. The site is located in the E½ of Section 1, T4S, R18E and consists of Lot 1 of the Weast Subdivision containing 8.66 acres. Until recently there were no improvements on this site. A baseball field has been constructed near the southwest corner of the lot (Figure 8) and site work has begun for construction of a new school facility (Figure 9).

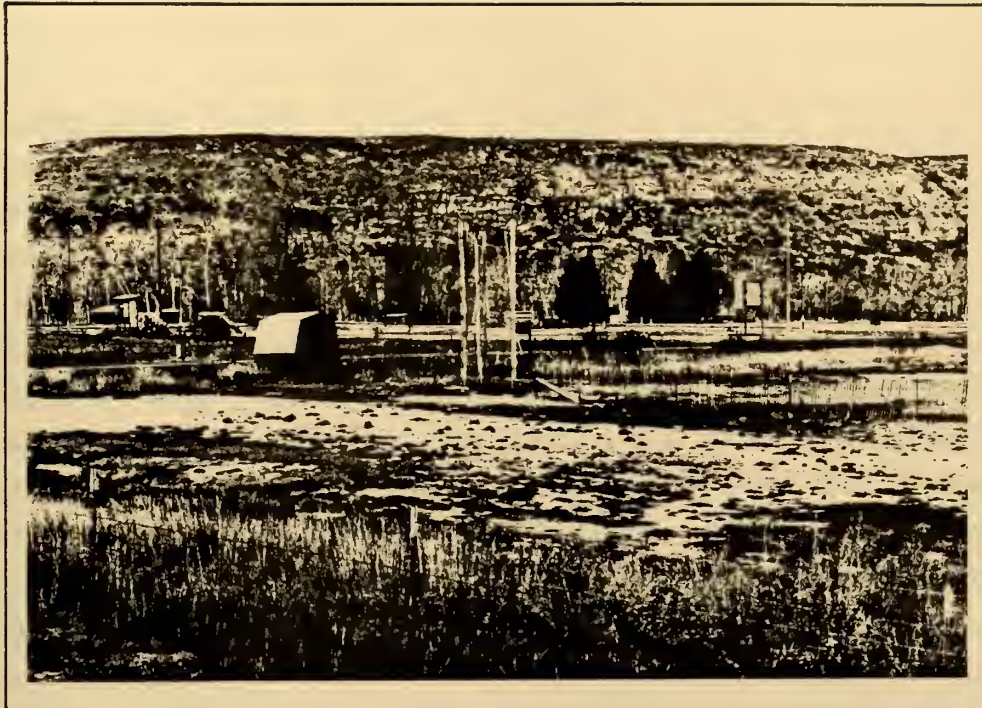


Figure 8. Baseball field developed on site of the new Absarokee School. Note existing athletic field in background.



Figure 9 Site work beginning at new school site in Absarokee. Note existing athletic field in background.

III. IMPACTS ON SECTION 4(f) RESOURCES

The Riverside Inn

As Figure 3 indicates, the boundary for the south portion of this site has been determined to be located adjacent to the existing highway and along the county road to the northwest. A steep hillside and the Kem-Mulherin irrigation ditch to the east, together with the Riverside Inn, the Stillwater River, and the Roadhouse irrigation ditch to the west preclude any major alignment shifts. With the location of the proposed alignment dictated by roadside constraints, and essentially in the same location as the PTW, the construction of a wider highway facility will mean encroachment onto the Riverside Inn site is unavoidable.

The linear encroachment will impact approximately 60 feet along the southeastern boundary of the site. The north portion of the site will not be impacted. None of the existing structures will be affected. The total amount of disturbed area on the southern portion of the site is estimated to be 0.34 acres.

Lower Stillwater River Historic Irrigation District

The following table lists the estimated impacts to the six irrigation ditches considered to be contributing elements of the historic irrigation district.

<u>DITCH</u>	<u>STATION INTERVAL</u>	<u>APPROXIMATE LINEAL FEET IMPACTED</u>
Agency Ditch	113± - 128±	1600'
Kem-Mulherin Ditch	374± - 377±	450'
	395± - 397±	200'
	407± - 418±	1100'
	432± - 435±	300'

Roadhouse Ditch	422± - 428±	600'
	464± - 470±	600'
	485± - 494±	900'
	504± - 515±	1100'
	539± - 553±	1400'
	557± - 559±	200'
	566± - 568±	200'
	576± - 595±	1900'
Scott Ditch	800± - 809±	900'
	820± - 835±	1500'
	841± - 847±	600'
	855± - 875±	2000'
Shane Ditch	884± - 887±	300'
	890± - 895±	500'
White Ditch	955± - 961± (Alt. A)	600'
	953± - 955± (Alt. B)	200'
	977± - 979± (Alt. B)	200'

As the table demonstrates, many of the impacts to the irrigation ditches occur at various locations along the course of the ditch. This type of sporadic impact is attributed to the existing location of the ditches in relation to the existing roadway. Often the ditches will run adjacent to the edge of the PTW, cross under the highway and then run adjacent to the other side of the highway.

Impacts include relocation of portions of the ditches as well as replacement of the exiting ditch crossings.

Any irrigation system relocation/modification will be coordinated with and have prior approval of the irrigation facility owners.

Absarokee School Site

The new school facility in Absarokee will be located directly across the highway from the school's existing athletic field,

another 4(f) property. With 4(f) involvement adjacent to the east and west sides of the PTW, avoidance of both sites is not possible. After consulting with members of the school board, the proposed alignment has been located to have a minor encroachment into the site of the existing athletic field in order to minimize impact on a baseball field recently developed on the south portion of the new school site. The ball field will be shifted from its present location, however it can remain on the south portion of the new school site. The proposed alignment will necessitate that right-of-way be acquired from the area of the existing athletic field and the new school site. Section 4(f) considerations are applicable to both of these areas.

IV. AVOIDANCE ALTERNATIVES

Alignment alternatives for this project are limited by the existing land use, terrain, and other environmental factors in the project area. While land use in the area is predominantly agricultural, development of homesites is occurring in many areas along the project corridor.

The existing roadway alignment closely parallels the Stillwater River and East Rosebud Creek, precluding major alignment shifts to the west. Additionally, a large portion of the irrigated land located west of the existing highway has been designated Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Attempting to relocate any significant length of the reconstructed highway into this farmland area would prove contrary to the Farmland Protection Policy Act. The purpose of the Act is to minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Additionally, the Stillwater City-County Planning Board, together with the Soil Conservation Service, has requested that pasture land, rather than irrigated land, be used wherever possible.

The dry shrublands east of the highway with their west-facing exposure provide the majority of cover habitat for local deer populations. This fact, together with the steep terrain and location of many irrigation ditches, preclude the option of shifting the alignment a great deal to the east.

Therefore, in general, adverse impacts caused by reconstruction and relocation of Montana Route 78 will be minimized by utilizing the existing highway corridor where possible.

Improving the horizontal and vertical alignments to meet current design standards will be accomplished by flattening or eliminating many of the existing curves.

Alternatives at 4(f) Sites

The Riverside Inn site is located adjacent to the west edge of the existing highway. Additionally, the Stillwater River and the Roadhouse irrigation ditch are located west of the PTW. There is a steep hillside and the Kem-Mulherin irrigation ditch east of the existing highway. Designing the new highway in essentially the same location as the existing PTW is the only practical alternative for reconstruction of the highway in this area. The new highway, due to its greater width, will cause some impact to the Riverside Inn site.

All of the irrigation ditches considered to be part of the historic irrigation district will be affected to some degree. Wherever possible, the proposed alignment has been located to minimize impact to these existing irrigation systems. The location of these ditches on both sides of the highway combined with the consideration given to design standards, existing residences and other historic sites makes avoidance impossible.

The Absarokee school site is adjacent to the east side of the existing highway right-of-way while the school's athletic field, another 4(f) property also owned by School District #52, is adjacent to the west side of the highway. Reconstruction of the highway to current design standards will require additional right-of-way. Avoidance of the site is not possible.

V. MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM

The Riverside Inn

Impacts to the Riverside Inn site will consist of construction limits extending beyond the southeastern boundary of the site. Non-standard highway ditch sections and fill slopes in this area have been considered in order to minimize impacts to the site. None of the existing structures on the site will be affected.

The Lower Stillwater Historic Irrigation District

The location of the proposed alignment has been selected to minimize impact to the irrigation ditches while at the same time, considering design standards, existing residences, land use, flood plain encroachment, wetlands and other historic sites. Non-standard highway ditch sections and non-standard fill slopes have also been considered to further reduce the impacts. All ditches will be perpetuated. MDOH and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) are in the process of negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement which stipulates other mitigation measures (see attached correspondence).

Absarokee School Site

Early coordination with the Absarokee School Board and with the architect responsible for development of the site plan for the new school, has helped to minimize impact to the site.

Shifting the alignment to the west will encroach slightly into the area of the existing athletic field. This shift will require the baseball field recently developed on the south portion of the new school site to be shifted to the east. Non-standard highway ditch sections and fill slopes have also been considered.

VI. COORDINATION

Coordination efforts on this project were initiated by the Montana Department of Highways on December 30, 1985 when a letter of intent was issued by the Department to federal, state, and local agencies and affected private organizations. Comments and information were requested which would be relevant to this project.

On January 9, 1989 a school board meeting was held in Absarokee. Representatives of the consulting firm responsible for design of the project and a representative of the Montana Department of Highways attended the meeting in an effort to keep the school board informed concerning the status of the preliminary design and the associated impacts on the new school site.

On March 23, 1989, a public information meeting was held at the Absarokee High School. The purpose of this meeting was to present the project to interested persons and local agencies and to solicit input on the project. The majority of those in attendance favored Alternate B, the preferred alternate.

Coordination regarding the cultural resource sites has been with the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Pertinent correspondence is included on the following pages.

State Historic Preservation Office

Montana Historical Society

Mailing Address: 225 North Roberts • Helena, MT 59620-9901

Office Address: 102 Broadway • Helena, MT • (406) 444-7711

August 10, 1988

Ms. Mitzi Rossillon
Archaeologist, Environmental Unit
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Absarokee-Columbus
F78-2(5)27

Dear Mitzi:

Thank you for submitting Janene's report on the project referenced above for our review and comments. The project presented a complex set of resources and management alternatives which Janene handled most skillfully. We concur with HRA's methods and results and agree with the vast majority of their recommendations. We are prepared to concur that the eleven properties and one irrigation district recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register are, indeed, eligible. The only thing I would add is that 24ST19, the Cobblestone Garage, should be considered eligible under Criterion A as well as under C.

In addition to the properties we all agree are eligible, I have a few additions for our mutual consideration. At 24ST171, although the whole complex clearly appears to retain too little integrity to qualify for listing, I believe the main house (recorded as Structure 1), might be considered eligible under C for its distinctive use of local materials in construction. The solar panels are not permanently affixed to the house, and the addition, while distracting, does not appear disqualifying. The Sandstone and Cobblestone schools of Absarokee are listed in the National Register, and we have agreed that the Cobblestone Garage is also eligible. The house in question illustrates another facet of the local affinity for use of that material, and seems sufficiently separable from the remainder of the farmstead to stand as eligible on its own merits.

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Rossillon
August 10, 1988
page 2

Johnson remembers adobe bricks from Agency buildings were hauled off to nearby ranches, where they were used again for buildings and generally structural work. That may have some indirect bearing on construction of the main house at 24ST169. Structure 1 at that site, too, may be both early and associated with the Agency. If that structure is in any danger from the present project, some further attempts to document its age and associations should be made. Isabelle might be a good source of information, although I note that Janene has already spoken with her.

Finally, the Agency Ditch, which may indeed be the only surviving resource associated with Crow Agency II, was lined with trees just after its construction. The vegetation was planted to stem erosion, and reportedly remains today. That feature would be considered an integral component of 24ST204.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and please call if discussion of these additional points will suffice.

Sincerely,



Katherine M. Fluppe
Historical Survey Reviewer

cc: Janene Caywood
Isabelle Johnson

File: Comp/MDOH/Absarokee-Columbus
NR/Consensus Determination files

Date Recd.	Project	File #	Attach
8/10	MAIL ROUTE	1	
8/10	30 Log. Structures	2	
8/10	31 Log. Structures	3	
8/10	32 Log. Structures	4	
8/10	33 Log. Structures	5	
8/10	34 Log. Structures	6	
8/10	35 Log. Structures	7	
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TO ALL INTERESTED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES
AND
THE PUBLIC

The following Final Environmental Assessment/Section 4(f) Statement (EA/4(f)) for Project No. F 78-2(5)27, Absarokee - Columbus, is submitted herewith for your review.

This EA/4(f) documents the various studies, meetings, and coordination that occurred during the development of this project.

It is imperative that the Montana Department of Highways be notified immediately of any objections of a substantive nature to this project. Comments should be submitted to the Montana Department of Highways on or before September 18, 1989. All comments should be sent to:

Stephen C. Kologi, Chief
Preconstruction Bureau
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620
Phone: (406)444-6242

The following list indicates those agencies and individuals who are being notified of this project. If you are aware of other agencies, groups or individuals that might be affected or concerned and are not on this list, please let us know and we will contact them.

Mailing List
F 78-2(5), Absarokee - Columbus

Department of Anthropology
University of Montana
Helena, MT 59801

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Department of Health
& Environmental Sciences
Air Quality Bureau
Cogswell Building
Helena, MT 59620

Department of Commerce
Oceanautics Division
Port Road
Helena, MT 59620

7
Department of Health
& Environmental Sciences
Water Quality Bureau
Cogswell Building
Helena, MT 59620

Department of Commerce
N: Admin. Trans. Div.
4 Ninth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

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Department of Natural Resources
& Conservation
Office of the Director
1520 East 6th
Helena, MT 59620

Department of Fish,
Wildlife & Parks
Project and Planning Bureau
Fish Division
10 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

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Department of State Lands
Office of the Commissioner
1625 - 11th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Department of Fish,
Wildlife & Parks
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10 East Sixth Avenue
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Environmental Quality Council
Office of the Director
Capitol Post Office
P. O. Box 215
Helena, MT 59620

Mailing List
F 78-2(5), Absarokee - Columbus

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Montana Department of Education
Montana State Library
5 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Department of the Army
Omaha District Corps of Engineers
Mr. Richard D. Gordon, Chief
Environmental Analysis Branch
215 N. 17th Street
Omaha, NE 68102

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Montana Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Officer
North Roberts Street
Helena, MT 59620

U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service, Region 1
ATTN: Regional Forester
P. O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59801

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Montana State University
Les Davis
Department of Anthropology
Helena, MT 59715

U.S. EPA Mont. Office
301 So. Park, Drawer 10096
Helena, MT 59626

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Montana State University
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Helena, MT 59715

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Region VIII
Denver Federal Center
Building 710
Denver, CO 80225

20

State Clearinghouse
Lieutenant Governor's Office
Capitol Building
Helena, MT 59620

Federal Housing Administration
Office of the Director
Housing and Urban Development
Federal Office Building
301 South Park, Drawer 10095
Helena, MT 59626

Mailing List
F 78-2(5), Absarokee - Columbus

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Bureau of Land Management
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U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
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Denver Federal Center
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Denver, CO 80225

Bureau of Reclamation
District Manager
Montana Projects Office
P.O. Box 30137
Helena, MT 59107-0137

27
U.S. Department of the Interior
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Project Review
Denver Federal Center
P.O. Box 25007
Building 56, Room 1018
Denver, CO 80225

U.S. Department of the Interior
Chief, Environmental Impact
Assessment Program
U.S. Geological Survey, MS-760
National Center
Reston, VA 22092

28
U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Geological Survey
Water Resources Division
Room 428, Federal Building
301 South Park, Drawer 10076
Helena, MT 59626

U.S. Department of the Interior
Chief, Western Field
Operation Center
Bureau of Mines
Post Office Box 360
Helena, MT 59601

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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
Airport District Office
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Helena, MT 59601

U.S. Department of Energy
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U.S. Department of Transportation
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301 South Park, Drawer 10056
Helena, MT 59626

Mailing List
F 78-2(5), Absarokee - Columbus

Department of Transportation
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Second Avenue
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36
Montana Stockgrowers Association
Office of the Secretary
P. O. Box 1679
Helena, MT 59624

Fish & Wildlife, Mont. Office
Conservation Division
Kemper McMaster, Field Supvr.
Federal Building
South Park
Helena, MT 59626

37
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Federal Building
10 E. Babcock Street, Rm. 443
Bozeman, MT 59715

American Wilderness Alliance
R. Merritt, Executive Director
Sawyer Lane
Helena, MT 59840

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Department of the Army
Seattle Dist. Corps of Eng.
P. O. Box C-3755
Seattle, WA 98124

Montana Automobile Association
P. O. Box 4129
Helena, MT 59604

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Director, Office of Environmental
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Room 4239, Main Interior Bldg.
18th & C St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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P. O. Box 1714
Helena, MT 59604

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Montana Wildlife Federation
P. O. Box 6537
Bozeman, MT 59715

Mailing List
F 78-2(5), Absarokee - Columbus

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te 230	H.S. Dist. 52
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	Absarokee, MT 59001

erra Club	47
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Sally Hammond	U.S. Post Office
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onorable Robert C. Kem	48
O. Box 575	U.S. Postmaster
lumbus, MT 59019	U.S. Post Office
	Columbus, MT 59019

lumbus Chamber of Commerce	49
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lumbus, MT 59019	P.O. Box 881
	Columbus, MT 59019

em. & H.S. Dist. No. 6	50
O. Box 899	Stillwater County Commissioners
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	Columbus, MT 59019

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F 78-2(5), Absarokee - Columbus

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Crow Tribal Council
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Crow Agency, MT 59022

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Cody, MT 59263

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Lodge, MT 59068

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East Broadway
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